United Nations A/C.1/53/PV.3

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-third session

First Committee

3rd Meeting

Monday, 12 October 1998, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . . (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: We are grateful to have Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services, Mr. Jin Yongjian, and Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, with us today. I warmly welcome them.

(*spoke in French*)

In accordance with its agenda, the First Committee will today begin its general debate on all disarmament and international security items. Allow me, however, first to make the traditional Chairman's opening statement.

At the risk of repeating myself, I should like warmly to welcome everyone here. I should also like to thank all delegations for the honour bestowed on my country and on me by my election to the chairmanship of the First Committee.

The fifty-third session of the General Assembly has begun its work in an atmosphere which in many ways should promote disarmament and international security. The long-awaited reduction of the nuclear threat over recent years has been accompanied by an increase in cultural and trade exchanges. This can only advance knowledge and respect for each other, the only genuine bases for peace.

We need to recall, however, that at the dawn of the First World War quite a few commentators believed war was impossible because of economic interdependence. Belgium is more aware than others of the value of such predictions. It knows that peace is not a random fact of history but, rather, the result of conscious and tenacious work carried out by men of goodwill. Backed by that conviction, my country has committed itself with determination to disarmament. A State party to all the major treaties governing both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, it will continue to follow that policy as long as it is possible and necessary.

Disarmament is certainly a difficult undertaking, with complex and varied aspects. It can only be implemented stage by stage, sometimes following a rather narrow path. What is at stake, however, allows no room for weakness. Nothing must hamper our dynamism, nothing must dilute our confidence, which should be strengthened by the considerable progress already made. Significant agreements and a broad consensus on future objectives are essential parts of this. Without going into the detail of all the positive recent developments in the area of concern to us, I believe it useful to give a rapid review, beginning with weapons of mass destruction.

Some might think that a priori this is the least promising subject and that the past year, for example, has seen quite a few regrettable events. The relative inertia in the START process, the continued existence of considerable nuclear arsenals and the recent nuclear tests in South Asia would seem to support that view, all the more so since we should be concerned about certain countries' lack of respect for international safeguards agreements and about suspicions regarding the development in various places of long-range ballistic missiles.

98-86047 (E)

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The difficulties in establishing a total ban on nuclear explosions and on the production of fissile material for military purposes could also justify a certain gloom. It would of course be ludicrous to deny the magnitude of the challenges thus facing us.

We would be wrong, however, to overly stress pessimism and to forget the important treaties that already govern weapons of mass destruction, such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) or those banning chemical and biological weapons. The continued progress made in these treaties towards universality is in itself a source of great satisfaction. Here I should like to hail the recent accession of Brazil to the NPT, which brings to 187 the number of States parties to this pivotal Treaty. So too in February Lithuania became the 141st country to accede to the Biological Weapons Convention, while in 1998 11 countries have acceded to the Convention banning chemical weapons, thus bringing the number of States parties to 117. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is making slow but sure progress; 151 countries have signed it and 21 have already ratified it.

Even though the size of the remaining strategic arsenals is considerable, it cannot be denied that substantive reductions have been made over these past few years by the United States and Russia, as well as by the European nuclear Powers. Other measures, such as detargeting and the reduction in the level of alert, are also highly promising. We would hope to see the dismantling of nuclear arsenals stepped up, but we cannot deny that the events under way are going in the right direction.

Significant progress has also been made at the Conference on Disarmament. The Conference has established two Ad Hoc Committees. The goal of one is effective international arrangements to guarantee non-nuclear States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The other has been entrusted to study the negotiation of a non-discriminatory, internationally and effectively verifiable multilateral treaty banning the production of fissile materials for the manufacture of weapons and other nuclear devices. The Conference on Disarmament has also appointed Special Coordinators entrusted with the task of reaching consensus concerning the transfer of anti-personnel mines, the prevention of the arms race in outer space and transparency in the arms field. There are also positive prospects for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on outer space in 1999.

Regarding biological weapons, we should hail the efforts made within the Ad Hoc Group to lead the international community to a protocol to strengthen the Convention. The treaty emphasizes the extent to which the conscience of mankind deplores the use of such methods of fighting. This reproof doubtless explains the considerable support for the establishment of a verification system.

The Committee will also agree that significant progress has been made with regard to security at the regional level, in particular through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok attest to the growing interest in the creation of such zones, and soon Central Asia will join them.

The indiscriminate use and proliferation of small arms creates a new challenge for the United Nations. There is every indication that it wishes to meet that challenge. The submission to the Secretary-General last August of the report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms was important in this regard. I am happy to have been able to contribute to it.

Now we can congratulate the Secretary-General on the attention he has been giving to the problem of requests for assistance from Member States. The impact of small arms on the security and development of many countries has led him to establish a mechanism entitled "Coordinated Action on Small Arms (CASA)", in which the Department for Disarmament Affairs is playing a critical role.

In the same spirit, a group of Member States has wished to politically and financially support measures such as the collection of small arms and the demobilization and reintegration of former fighters into civilian society.

In many cases the new priority has been reflected not only in speeches but also in deeds. It is of course impossible to engage in an exhaustive summary, but some should be singled out for special mention.

In July 1998 the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Production of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials demonstrated a considerable international effort designed to control this kind of trade.

This year too the European Union adopted a code of conduct on the export of arms which will be a useful supplement to its 1997 programme designed to combat the illicit trade in conventional weapons.

In West Africa, Mali and other countries are pursuing, on the basis of extensive and successful national experience, the establishment of a regional moratorium.

In a related field, 92 countries this year participated in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, the highest number recorded so far. We should also welcome the publication for the first time of data dealing with national production. Of course, we are still far from universality, and I can only encourage all Governments to take part in this exercise.

At the same time, the quality of information supplied by Member States regarding their military expenditures has continued to improve. Collective awareness of the threat caused by conventional weapons can only gain from an expansion of and improvement in the mechanism for information and transparency.

One of the main concerns of the overwhelming majority of delegations continues to be that of anti-personnel mines. It is with great pleasure that the First Committee can hail the entry into force of the Convention banning anti-personnel mines. This major effort marks the conclusion of years of effort by numerous Governments, supplemented by decisive action by non-governmental organizations.

Before I conclude I should like to say a few words about the organization of the Committee's work. As delegations are aware, the First Committee has been entrusted with disarmament for 14 years now. Its activities supplement efforts made elsewhere, in particular at the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. In 1997 my distinguished predecessor, Mr. Nkgowe of Botswana, asked the Committee to dedicate itself to "formulating an international disarmament agenda in such a way that it is focused on attainable goals". (*A/C.1/52/PV.3, p. 4*). For him, this agenda was to be practical, action-oriented and focused on key, up-to-date issues. I should like to endorse that recommendation and to encourage all members to reflect on the most appropriate method to implement it.

I should also like to say how deeply indebted I am to the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Dhanapala, and the officers of the Committee for the goodwill and wise advice which they will contribute to our deliberations.

Like my predecessors, I should like to point out that it is important for us to conduct our work within the time limits set for us; it is important also that speakers keep to topics specific to this Committee. In that spirit I am gratified to be able to work with the Chairmen of the regional groups and with all representatives and all delegations.

Progress in disarmament is not made in haste. On the contrary, patience and caution guarantee solid gains. But if the rhythm of diplomacy in disarmament is closer to that of botany than to that of mechanics we would be wrong to find there a pretext for excessive slowness or for unjustified procrastination. On the contrary, it is important to take advantage of every opportunity to make progress. The First Committee at this fifty-third session of the General Assembly provides one of those opportunities, and we must continue to be aware of that.

May our sole concern be to make our collective effort both consistent and fruitful. If the intensity of our commitment is commensurate with our patience we shall be meeting the expectations of the international community.

Statement by the Secretary-General

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the Committee, I have the honour and great pleasure of warmly welcoming Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, who has kindly agreed to address the First Committee on the first day of its substantive work.

The Secretary-General: Let me begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to chair this important Committee. The fact that it is the First Committee of the General Assembly reflects the priority given to disarmament by the United Nations in its earliest days. I believe that emphasis was right.

As members of the Committee know, I decided last year to re-establish the Department for Disarmament Affairs, with an Under-Secretary-General as its head. I was very pleased that the General Assembly supported that decision. I am also glad that it acted on my recommendation to review the work of the Disarmament Commission and of this Committee. I know that the Committee plans to update, streamline and revitalize its work, and I look forward eagerly to the results.

I am also delighted to have Jayantha Dhanapala as Under-Secretary-General. He is ideally qualified for the post and has made an excellent start. Perhaps members are wondering why he is not here today. In a sense I am representing him while he is representing me. He has gone at my request to the capital of your country,

Mr. Chairman, to attend a conference on the important theme of "sustainable disarmament for sustainable development". It is good that the connection between these two central themes of the United Nations agenda — disarmament and development — is increasingly being understood and recognized.

Disarmament lies at the heart of the Organization's efforts to maintain and strengthen international peace and security.

It is sometimes said that weapons do not kill; people do. And it is true that in recent years some horrific acts of violence have been committed without recourse to sophisticated weapons. The Rwandan genocide is the example which haunts us all, but I could cite many others. Freshest in our minds, because of the horrific pictures we have seen, are the recent massacres in Kosovo. Small arms are used to inflict death or injury on thousands upon thousands of civilians every year. Even more shockingly, the overwhelming majority of these are women and children.

So disarmament has to concern itself with small weapons as well as large. I am glad that the international community is now coming to realize this. Let me salute in particular the moratorium initiated by the Economic Community of West African States on the trade and manufacture of small arms, and the recent entry into force of the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of, and Trafficking in, Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials. Perhaps we need next a convention limiting the length of the titles of international agreements!

I must also thank Michael Douglas — a redoubtable handler of small arms on the cinema screen — for his work as a Messenger of Peace, alerting public opinion to the terrible damage these weapons cause in real life. I believe the global civil society can be mobilized on this issue as it has been so successfully on the issue of anti-personnel landmines.

We must be thankful that so many Member States have signed and ratified the Ottawa Convention — a global ban on landmines — which will enter into force next March, and we must now work hard to make this ban universal.

At the same time, we cannot afford to slacken our efforts to contain the proliferation of larger weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction. It would be the height of folly to take it for granted that such weapons are too terrible ever to be used and that States would keep them only as a deterrent. We know that nuclear weapons were used in 1945, from the devastating effects of which the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are still suffering more than half a century later.

We know too that chemical weapons have been used extensively, notably against Iran and against civilians in northern Iraq in 1988. There too, 10 years later, the people of Halabja are still suffering the effects in the form of debilitating disease, birth deformities and aborted pregnancies.

As for the menace of biological weapons, it is almost too horrible to imagine. Yet we know that some States have developed such weapons and are keeping them in their arsenals. As long as States have such weapons at their disposal there will always be the risk that sooner or later they will resort to using them. And there is the ever present risk that they will escape from the control of States and fall into the hands of terrorists. That is why we must intensify our efforts to expand the membership of the Conventions on chemical weapons and biological weapons and make observance of them verifiable.

That is also why we must be concerned about the nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan this year. Of course, I warmly welcome the declarations of intent to adhere to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) made here in the General Assembly by the Prime Ministers of those two States. We must all work to ensure that that Treaty enters into force as soon as possible. But we must also work to finish the job of promoting universal adherence to all the key treaties on weapons of mass destruction, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We must also bear in mind that the long-term sustainability of that Treaty depends on all parties' working seriously to implement all its articles.

The United Nations has worked for more than half a century to eliminate nuclear weapons everywhere and to oppose their acquisition anywhere. Given the potential devastation from the use of even one nuclear weapon, I believe global nuclear disarmament must remain at the top of our agenda. I look to this Committee to take the lead in working to rid the world of this menace and that of chemical and biological weapons.

I said a little earlier that disarmament and development are intimately connected. I believe they are in two ways.

First, disarmament is essential to effective conflict prevention and post-conflict peace-building in many parts of the developing world, and conflict is the worst enemy of development everywhere.

Secondly, even when an arms race does not lead directly to conflict, it still constitutes a cruel diversion of skills and resources away from development. While so many human needs remain unsatisfied, millions of people on this planet depend for their livelihood on producing, distributing or maintaining engines designed only to destroy — engines of which the best one can hope is that they will not be used. That is a terrible waste. More than that, it is a source of deep shame. As long as it continues none of us can take much pride in our humanity. The world looks to the United Nations, and the United Nations looks to this Committee to lead it in a different and more hopeful direction. I wish the Committee every success in its work. Be assured that it will have all the support that we in the Secretariat can give.

The Chairman: I thank Mr. Kofi Annan for his inspiring remarks, which I am sure will contribute significantly to the deliberations of the Committee. I understand that the Secretary-General has other pressing engagements and that he will have to leave us at this point. I wish him every success in his important endeavours.

Agenda items 63 to 79

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. De Icaza (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me to convey to you, Sir, my delegation's congratulations on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee and to offer you our support in the conduct of our work. We have long been familiar with your professional skill and mastery of the issues of disarmament and security, and so we are sure that you will discharge your high responsibilities outstandingly and efficiently.

Through you, Sir, I wish to express the thanks of my delegation to the Secretary-General for addressing us. We know that his thinking on disarmament topics will duly be reflected in our debates.

This year we are celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. The international scene today is profoundly different from what it was 20 years ago; nevertheless, the Declaration of principles, the Programme of Action and the mechanisms for disarmament approved by consensus in that Final Document retain their full validity. The existence of nuclear weapons still constitutes a threat to the very survival of mankind, and disarmament and arms limitation, especially in the nuclear sphere, continue to be essential if we are to prevent the threat of nuclear war, strengthen international peace and security and promote the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

With the end of the cold war and the banning of chemical and biological weapons, the arguments that used to be invoked to justify the possession, stockpiling and technological improvement of nuclear weapons, and even their possible use, with potentially catastrophic results, have disappeared. Nevertheless, not only do nuclear weapons continue to exist, but new justifications have emerged in the form of new doctrines of deterrence, and even doctrines of first use, and these have been subscribed to by nuclear-weapon Powers which had formerly rejected them.

Still more serious, disturbing cracks have appeared in the international non-proliferation regime, and the reduction processes that appeared so promising, such as START, now appear to have come to a standstill.

Meanwhile, the risks of nuclear weapons being used by accident or miscalculation, or in an unauthorized manner, have increased, not decreased, and the risks of loss of control of the technology and materials associated with the manufacture of nuclear weapons have become greater. Taken together, all these factors would appear to lead to the conclusion that the probability of nuclear weapons being used is now greater than it was in 1978. Accordingly, the priority today, as then, in relation to disarmament and security must be nuclear disarmament, which calls for urgent negotiations in appropriate phases and with adequate verification measures, leading as soon as possible to the complete and definitive elimination of nuclear-weapon arsenals and their delivery systems.

The paralysis in the nuclear disarmament process and in negotiations is apparent from the fact that almost six years after its signature the START II Treaty has still not entered into force, the Conference on Disarmament has not been able to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, the Disarmament Commission has not reached consensus on the objective or the agenda for a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, and the Preparatory Committee for the Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty

has not succeeded in formulating substantive recommendations on nuclear disarmament.

Some of these facts are undoubtedly the result of temporary situations, but underlying them and not infrequently coming to the surface are archaic perceptions of the role of nuclear weapons in military strategies, and these are in urgent need of change. We shall see no substantive advances in the absence of an unequivocal commitment to a nuclear-weapon-free world. In order to make progress towards this objective there needs to be a conviction that possessing nuclear weapons confers neither special rights nor special privileges, in no way guarantees invulnerability, but, on the contrary, increases the vulnerability of those that possess them, and that the very existence of these weapons is an intolerable threat to mankind.

The international non-proliferation regime, consisting of the nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties, the 1968 Non-Proliferation Treaty and the decisions that accompanied its indefinite extension in 1995, and the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, needs to be maintained and strengthened, because it is essential to international peace and security and because it is a prerequisite and legally binding support for nuclear disarmament. This regime urgently needs the attention of the international community, as it has been seriously affected this year by the failure of the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and, in particular, by the nuclear-weapon tests that took place in South Asia.

The second session of the Preparatory Committee concluded with a procedural report only, not merely because of the absence of consensus in a given situation but because of differing views on the scope and purpose of the Preparatory Committee, particularly on principles, objectives and means of achieving nuclear disarmament and the full implementation of article VI of the Treaty.

The Non-Proliferation Treaty, the cornerstone of the regime, is transient in nature, notwithstanding its indefinite extension. It is valid only until nuclear disarmament is achieved, and resolute, systematic and progressive efforts towards the final objective of eliminating nuclear weapons worldwide are of crucial importance to it. Interruptions or pauses, and above all deadlocks, in the nuclear disarmament process call into question the international non-proliferation regime, because they accentuate its imbalances and make it difficult for it to achieve the necessary universality. At its next session the Preparatory Committee will have to make a special effort to reach a consensus that will make it possible to formulate concrete recommendations on nuclear disarmament at the Conference of the Parties in the year 2000.

The Preparatory Committee also needs to recommend to the Conference the establishment of subsidiary bodies to deal with specific issues relating to the Treaty, so that they can be studied in greater detail. We welcome in this context South Africa's important initiative for detailed discussion of the issue of security assurances.

Mexico deplored and condemned the nuclear-weapon tests conducted in South Asia in May this year, as it has always condemned the conducting of any nuclear-weapon test, the definitive halting of which is essential to world peace and security, to the international non-proliferation regime in all its aspects and to the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world. At this session of the General Assembly we shall be submitting draft resolutions deploring the conducting of any nuclear-weapon tests and calling for the early signature and ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, maintenance of the moratoriums, and respect for the spirit and letter of the Treaty pending its entry into force.

The constant threat which the existence of nuclear weapons poses to mankind, the paralysis in multilateral forums in negotiations to achieve nuclear disarmament and the pressures on the international non-proliferation regime have convinced many countries of the need for a new international agenda to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world through the parallel implementation of mutually reinforcing measures at the bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral levels. In June this year the Foreign Ministers of Mexico, Brazil, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden issued a joint Declaration to this effect, and we shall be submitting a draft resolution for consideration by the General Assembly.

It is time to bring an end to extreme positions on nuclear disarmament. The time has come to take the necessary steps to give new strength and perspective to nuclear disarmament. The circumstances are favourable and much is at stake. We must all, without exception, make an unequivocal commitment to a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Today nuclear-weapon-free zones cover more than 50 per cent of the planet's land surface. Mexico will continue to support efforts aimed at the creation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of agreements freely arrived at between the States of which they are composed and at

strengthening existing nuclear-weapon-free zones so that they may achieve regional universality. We will seek to expand political links between existing zones in order to progress towards the objective of freeing the entire southern hemisphere and its adjacent areas from nuclear weapons. We support the initiative for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia.

The Government of Mexico reiterates its readiness to cooperate in the establishment of mechanisms for coordination and cooperation between the bodies established under the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok, with a view to exchanging information and experiences that will make it possible to promote our common objectives.

The establishment in August this year of an Ad Hoc Committee, under item 1 of the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament, charged with negotiating a convention banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices has the support of my delegation. Nevertheless, we wish to make it clear that for Mexico it is a priority that the treaty should constitute not only a non-proliferation measure but also a genuine nuclear disarmament measure.

While a halt in the production of fissile material must be one of the objectives of the treaty, for it to constitute a genuine nuclear disarmament measure, binding commitments are required with respect to the treatment to be accorded to existing stockpiles, including those for civilian reactors using fissile material that may also have military applications. We are committed to participating constructively in the Conference on Disarmament in negotiations conducted on a transparent basis and agreed to by consensus.

My delegation is pleased that, a year after the entry into force of the Paris Convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons and the launching of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, the latter has embarked on its institution-building phase and the verification regime under the Convention is in full force. These achievements need to be strengthened through full completion of the initial declaration process, which, as yet, 26 per cent of the States parties to the Convention are far from having undertaken. The reluctance of States bound by articles IV and V of the Convention to assume the costs resulting from the verification and destruction of stockpiled chemical weapons is a matter of concern for my delegation.

Mexico has on various occasions indicated the priority it attaches to the conclusion of negotiations on a protocol with respect to verification of the Convention banning biological weapons. It has associated itself with the joint statements of the non-aligned countries and the States of Latin America. On 23 September Mexico's Foreign Minister, Ambassador Rosario Green, participated in the ministerial meeting at which 57 States reiterated their political will to conclude negotiations on a verification protocol in order to strengthen the regime for the banning of biological weapons.

Mexico reiterates its call for flexibility in order to discharge the mandate of the Ad Hoc Group by designing an efficient and low-cost verification mechanism and putting into effect measures that will strengthen international cooperation in biotechnology and the equipment associated with its peaceful uses.

For the verification mechanism to be reliable and to promote trust among States, its provisions need to be defined rigorously and with legal clarity. All duplications and ambiguities, as well as unnecessary interpolations, need to be avoided. The protocol must be able to achieve universality and to do so it needs to be approved by consensus.

Mexico's interests and initiatives are not confined to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction — starting with nuclear weapons — although nuclear disarmament is for our country, as for the majority of nations, the highest priority in disarmament. The excessive availability, stockpiling and transfer of conventional weapons, especially the illegal traffic in small arms and light weapons, affects the security of all States, since they not only fuel conflicts but also strengthen organized crime, making it more difficult to combat drug-trafficking and encouraging terrorism.

Evidence of the urgent need to adopt effective measures against illicit trafficking is provided by the speed with which it was possible to negotiate and conclude, on the initiative of the Government of Mexico, the Inter-American Convention Against the Illicit Manufacturing of, and Trafficking in, Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials, which was signed by 29 countries on 14 November 1997 in the presence of the Presidents of Mexico and the United States of America at the headquarters of the Organization of American States (OAS). I am pleased to report that the Convention is now in force, with the deposit of the instruments of ratification by the Governments of Mexico and Belize, and we hope

that it will shortly attain the regional universality it deserves.

Mexico supports the work of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms by participating actively in the experts' discussion regarding the implementation of measures to prevent and reduce excessive and destabilizing accumulations and transfers of such weapons. Mexico hopes that the Panel will be able to submit for the consideration of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session a report containing additional measures for the attainment of those objectives. We wish to express our support for the holding of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects, as proposed in the report of the previous Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms. We believe that the international community should take advantage of the current favourable situation for defining international actions to combat illicit trafficking in small arms.

The worldwide mobilization for the eradication of anti-personnel mines culminated in the deposit, on 16 September, of the fortieth instrument of ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. The speed with which the process of ratification of the Convention was completed, which will enable it to enter into force on 1 March next year, is a source of profound satisfaction for my Government. Mexico, acting on the basis of its commitment to make its provisions effective, deposited its instrument of ratification of the Ottawa Convention on 9 June this year.

The countries committed to the total banning of anti-personnel mines will be submitting to the General Assembly a draft resolution inviting all States to sign, ratify or accede without delay to the Ottawa Convention.

With the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention we face the challenge of its effective implementation. The Governments of Mexico and Canada, with the support of the OAS, will in January 1999 be convening in Mexico a regional seminar with the purpose of making progress towards the objective of proclaiming the western hemisphere a zone free of anti-personnel mines in the year 2000. We also undertake to participate actively in the preparatory work for the first meeting of States parties, which will take place in Maputo next year.

When I spoke in the First Committee last year I said:

> "It is the responsibility of all to respond to the universal demands for a nuclear-weapon-free world. Those of us who are committed to the goal of nuclear disarmament will in the end find a way to overcome the paralysis imposed on us." (*A/C.1/52/PV.3, p. 6*)

I added that Mexico would be initiating consultations to explore the possibility of holding a world conference on nuclear disarmament. We are pleased to inform the Committee that this idea is well under way and is winning support. In June this year President Mubarak of Egypt took the initiative of calling for the convening, as soon as possible, of an international conference to consider the measures required to achieve a world free from weapons of mass destruction, and in particular nuclear weapons, and at the twelfth summit of the Non-Aligned Movement the Heads of State or Government called for the holding of an international conference for the purpose of reaching agreement before the end of this millennium on a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Where nuclear disarmament — the responsibility of all — is concerned we must all strive to overcome the current paralysis that prevails in negotiations and in multilateral forums.

Mr. Hajnoczi (Austria): On behalf of the European Union (EU) let me congratulate you most sincerely, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are confident that your able direction, long-standing experience and well-earned reputation in the disarmament community will ensure fruitful work in the Committee this year. The European Union assures you of its wholehearted support in the discharge of your important responsibilities. We are particularly happy to see the representative of an EU member State in the chair.

We are most grateful to the Secretary-General for addressing the First Committee this morning and giving such an important statement.

The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — as well as European Free Trade Association (EFTA) country member of the European Economic Area, Iceland, align themselves with this statement.

As the end of the twentieth century approaches, there have been important achievements in the international security environment, but it also faces serious challenges.

The opening for signature and the prospect of the entry into force on 1 March 1999 of the Ottawa Convention; the recent decision to start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty; work on setting up the verification system for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); the adoption of a Model Protocol, in addition to existing safeguards agreements at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to strengthen nuclear safeguards; the continuation of the reinforced process of reviewing the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the active pursuit of negotiations, in the Ad Hoc Group, on a legally binding protocol establishing a verification and compliance regime which would effectively strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention; and the efforts currently devoted to problems caused by the excessive availability, accumulation and uncontrolled proliferation of small arms: all bear witness to the commitment of the international community to develop the network of international disarmament and non-proliferation agreements further.

Regrettably, despite these measures, the risk of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the problems caused by destabilizing accumulations of conventional weapons have still not been removed. The European Union calls for a continuing commitment by the international community in the fight against such risks, which threaten us all.

The European Union expresses its deep concern over the situation in South Asia. The nuclear tests by India and Pakistan have damaged stability in the region and isolated both countries from the international community's efforts on non-proliferation. The Union has repeatedly condemned those tests, has called on both countries to adhere to the international non-proliferation regime and strongly urged India and Pakistan to refrain from further nuclear tests and from the development, assembly or deployment of nuclear weapons and/or ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads.

The European Union has taken due note of statements by both sides regarding moratoriums on further nuclear tests. The European Union welcomes the apparent intention of India and Pakistan to adhere to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. They should sign and ratify the Treaty swiftly and unconditionally. They should also adhere to the Non-Proliferation Treaty as it stands. The European Union welcomes the intention of India and Pakistan to contribute to the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty in the Ad Hoc Committee of the Conference on Disarmament. We now urge both countries to introduce moratoriums on fissile material production while a treaty is negotiated. We urge both countries to legislate to exert stringent controls over the export of material, equipment and technology controlled under the Nuclear Suppliers Group trigger and dual-use lists and the Missile Technology Control Regime Annex.

The European Union welcomes the 23 September agreement by India and Pakistan to resume the dialogue between them on all outstanding issues, particularly on all matters pertaining to peace and security. The Union stands ready to contribute to efforts to promote regional stability.

With regard to security developments in Europe, the Union is pursuing the objective of consolidating peace and stability for the whole of the continent. The development of the new European security architecture should reflect the new spirit of cooperation in Europe, which must now be worked out more fully. European security is by definition comprehensive and indivisible, and the new security architecture must give full weight to the legitimate security interests of all the countries of Europe and presume the freedom of States to choose their own security arrangements. The European Union accordingly believes that the various organizations with responsibility for security in Europe should continue to interact and mutually reinforce one another. It encourages close coordination and, where appropriate, cooperation between the international organizations concerned, notably between the United Nations and the other institutions which have responsibility for European security.

One of the main objectives of the Union in the work within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is to develop a new charter on European Security. The Union actively supports the OSCE as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter and its role within the OSCE area in conflict prevention, the peaceful settlement of disputes and the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Also in this respect the Union has continued to develop its relationship with the Western European Union (WEU) which allows the EU to play a more active role in the so-called Petersberg tasks, which include certain peace support operations. The European Union is convinced that the current enlargement of the North Atlantic Alliance and the open-door policy of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will contribute

to the consolidation of peace and stability without creating new divisions in Europe. The Union is also making an important contribution, through the active pursuit of a transparent and open dialogue with other countries on the continent — such as the Russian Federation and Ukraine — and with neighbouring regions, notably the countries of the Mediterranean basin, on issues regarding the new security architecture.

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) is a cornerstone of Europe's security and should remain so in the new European security architecture. To this end the EU calls on States parties to the CFE Treaty to conclude the adaptation negotiations expeditiously. It welcomes the decision of 23 July 1997 on certain basic elements for treaty adaptation and the progress achieved since then. We look forward to speedy progress in the forthcoming negotiations in Vienna. Member countries of the OSCE which are not parties to the Treaty are being informed of the progress of negotiations in the OSCE Forum for Security Cooperation, which continues to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of conventional arms control in Europe. Among other things, the OSCE plays an important role in assisting the implementation of the commitments on arms limitation and regional stabilization provided for in the general framework on peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Union welcomes the continuing progress with regard to confidence-building and security-building measures and arms control in the former Yugoslavia, as covered in articles II and IV of annex 1 B of the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement (A/50/790). The Union looks forward to the commencement of negotiations as provided for in article V of annex 1 B, with the objective of establishing regional peace and stability in and around the former Yugoslavia, and calls on the parties to engage actively in the upcoming negotiation process.

Consolidating peace in the former Yugoslavia and solving the Kosovo crisis continued to be one of the Union's top priorities in the past year. The Union remains committed to implementing the arms embargo on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and has asked the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM) in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania to report to the Sanctions Committee any relevant information that should come into its possession on the movement of arms. The Union also remains fully committed to the objectives agreed at the Bonn Peace Implementation Council last December for implementation of the Dayton/Paris Peace Agreement this year and beyond.

The European Union is deeply concerned and alarmed at the situation in Kosovo, and calls for immediate and full compliance with all the provisions of Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998) and 1199 (1998).

As the largest donor to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Union is particularly concerned to see progress through permanent peace, reconciliation and stability. The EU has supported institution-building, reconstruction and refugee return in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To underpin this commitment the Union issued a declaration on 8 June on closer cooperation between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Europe, if Bosnia and Herzegovina continues on the right road to peace and democracy.

The Union also launched a Consultative Task Force to use EU expertise to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina along this road. Now the September elections have taken place the Union will continue this close cooperation if the new leadership lives up to its obligations as set out in the Dayton/Paris Agreement.

The Union reiterates its request that signatory States that have not yet ratified the "Open Skies" Treaty should do so as soon as possible.

The European Union attaches the utmost importance to progress in the areas of disarmament, arms control and non-proliferation as a key element of the maintenance of peace and the strengthening of international security. The Union will continue to make a substantial contribution to the promotion of international efforts in this respect.

The Union considers that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons remains the cornerstone of the global non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament. The EU promotes the implementation of the objectives laid down in the Treaty and the 1995 decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The EU attaches the utmost importance to a universal adherence to the Treaty that strengthens its fundamental role and reinforces global non-proliferation and disarmament objectives, and warmly welcomes the recent accession of Brazil to the NPT.

In preparing for the second session in 1998, the Council defined a common position on 23 April this year, setting the EU objectives with a view to the successful

outcome of the 2000 NPT Review Conference. Pursuant to the provisions of the common position, the EU will continue to promote universal accession to the NPT, encourage participation in the Preparatory Committee's sessions and in the 2000 Review Conference and help to build consensus at the Preparatory Committee's sessions and at the Conference itself. The Union regrets that the Preparatory Committee's second session did not allow for substantial results on substantive issues and did not lead to recommendations to the third session. We urge all participants in the third session of the Preparatory Committee to work towards consensus solutions. Bearing in mind the importance of the decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, the European Union remains firmly committed to the successful outcome of the 2000 Review Conference and is ready to continue to play an active and constructive role in the strengthened review process.

The European Union welcomed the adoption on 15 May 1997 by the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of a Model Protocol Additional to Safeguards Agreements containing measures to strengthen the effectiveness and improve the efficiency of the Agency's safeguards system, by increasing its ability to detect undeclared nuclear activities. On 8 June 1998 the European Union Council authorized the Commission to conclude with the IAEA, on behalf of the European Atomic Energy Community, three additional protocols covering the 13 non-nuclear-weapon member States of the EU, the United Kingdom and France. On 22 September 1998 these additional protocols were signed in Vienna by the parties concerned. The Union calls on all States having safeguards agreements with the IAEA to conclude additional protocols to these agreements on the basis of the Model Protocol.

We must once again reiterate that we remain deeply concerned by the continuing non-compliance of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with its safeguards agreement. We strongly urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to come into full compliance with its safeguards agreement with the IAEA at the earliest possible time and to support non-proliferation efforts by refraining from any act, including any act in the ballistic missiles field, that would run counter to stability in the region. The EU expresses its concern at the launch carried out by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 31 August. We continue fully to support the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) and the Agreed Framework, and we call on other countries to contribute to the non-proliferation objectives of the organization.

The situation in Iraq calls for continued vigilance. The EU is committed to full implementation of all relevant Security Council resolutions and urges Iraq to comply with the provisions of these resolutions and with the Memorandum of Understanding signed in February this year by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq. Full compliance with the disarmament provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions will enable the Security Council to lift sanctions in accordance with paragraph 22 of Security Council resolution 687 (1991).

The EU deplores Iraq's unilateral suspension of cooperation with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and the IAEA. The European Union is concerned that Iraq remains in contravention of its obligations under the Security Council resolutions and the Memorandum of Understanding. This situation is totally unacceptable. Iraq must respond immediately to Security Council resolution 1194 (1998) and resume full cooperation with UNSCOM and the IAEA. The European Union notes that the Secretary-General has presented his view to Security Council members on the comprehensive review of Iraq's compliance with the relevant resolutions, as required by Security Council resolution 1194 (1998). Once Iraq has resumed full cooperation, as required by Security Council resolution 1194 (1998), such a review should take place and it should address Iraq's compliance and what remains to be done under the relevant resolutions.

Following the successful conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1996, which constitutes an important step on the way towards the implementation of the principles and objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament the European Union has been active and will continue to be active in promoting the early entry into force of the Treaty and its universality. The European Union welcomes the fact that 150 countries have signed the Treaty and 21 have now ratified it. It calls on all States to sign and ratify the Treaty, especially those 44 States whose ratification is needed for the Treaty to come into force. The Union also fully supports the efforts of the Preparatory Committee to establish the Treaty's verification regime in a timely and effective manner.

As the CTBT negotiations have been successfully concluded, the realization of the second measure under the action programme contained in the decision on principles and objectives is now called for. This involves the immediate commencement and early conclusion of negotiations on a non-discriminatory and universally applicable convention banning the production of fissile

material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices — the fissile material cut-off treaty. Therefore Austria, currently holding the Presidency of the European Union, proposed a draft decision on the fissile material cut-off treaty at the beginning of the 1998 session of the Conference on Disarmament. The Union heartily welcomes the achievement of consensus on the basis of the Shannon Report and the mandate contained therein, and the decision to establish an Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

We have frequently reiterated the importance of such a treaty which will make a significant contribution to the achievement of both nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. We urge all States to introduce or maintain a moratorium on fissile material production for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices pending the conclusion of these negotiations. We look forward to making our contribution to the substantial negotiations which should start at the beginning of the 1999 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

The European Union continues to believe that the systematic and progressive efforts of nuclear-weapon States to globally reduce nuclear weapons need to be intensified and pursued with determination. Following the entry into force and rapid implementation of START I, and unilateral measures taken by other nuclear-weapon States, including the United Kingdom following its strategic defence review, and France, the Union reiterates its urgent call on the Russian Federation to ratify the START II Treaty without delay so as to enable its rapid entry into force and the immediate opening and rapid conclusion of negotiations on a START III treaty.

The European Union welcomes the recent renewed commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to nuclear disarmament under article VI of the NPT and expresses its strong hope that START III will be followed by further reductions. It has taken note of the recent initiative on nuclear disarmament by several countries, including Ireland and Sweden. It also takes note of Belgium's proposal at the Conference on Disarmament to establish a study group on the exchange of information related to article VI of the NPT.

In line with the principles and objectives of the NPT, the European Union considers that further steps should be considered to assure non-nuclear-weapon States Parties to the NPT against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. These steps could take the form of an internationally legally binding instrument. In this respect, the Union stresses the importance of the decision by the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee on negative security assurances.

In the Union's view, the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, on the basis of arrangements freely concluded between the States of the region concerned, strengthens global and regional peace and security. The Union underlines the importance of such zones, as well as the establishment of zones free of all weapons of mass destruction, the significance of which was emphasized by the decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. It welcomes advances made so far and continues to support efforts to establish a Middle Eastern zone free of nuclear arms and a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems, as well as zones free of nuclear weapons in South Asia and Central Asia. The Union notes that all but one of the countries in the Middle East region are parties to the NPT. It recalls the resolution of the 1995 NPT Conference calling upon all States in the Middle East which had not yet done so to accede without exception to the NPT as soon as possible and to make progress towards the creation of such a zone.

The European Union considers the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), which entered into force on 29 April 1997, a landmark in the disarmament process. It is strongly committed to its universality and to the full and effective implementation of its provisions. It calls on all States that have not yet done so to ratify and accede to the Convention without delay. It also calls on all States parties to fulfil without delay their obligations in relation to the declarations required by the Convention, as well as all their other obligations under the Convention. In this context the Union recalls its decision to offer assistance to the Russian Federation in fields related to the Convention. This assistance complements the bilateral assistance provided for this purpose by several of its member States. The Union will continue to contribute actively to the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and to the setting up of the Organization's institutional and organizational structures.

The European Union reaffirms the high priority it gives to the reinforcement of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC), in particular to the early and

successful conclusion of the negotiations in the BWC Ad Hoc Group on a legally binding protocol establishing a verification and compliance regime which will effectively strengthen the Convention. The EU wishes to see the adoption of the protocol in 1999 and supports the Declaration adopted on 23 September in New York at the informal ministerial meeting on the negotiations towards the conclusion of the protocol to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention.

The Union has always played an active role in the Ad Hoc Group negotiations and has reaffirmed its continued commitment by defining on 4 March 1998 a common position on progress towards a BWC legally binding protocol and on intensifying work in the Ad Hoc Group to that end, notably through the allocation of the time necessary to the negotiations. In its common position the Union identifies particular measures which are deemed to be both central and essential to an effective protocol, such as declarations, visits, and provisions for rapid and effective investigations, as well as a cost-effective and independent organization. The Union was strongly encouraged by the support that the elements of its common position gathered in the Ad Hoc Group and will continue to promote its objectives in future sessions.

The European Union emphasizes the scale of the contribution made by the non-proliferation and export control systems to the concerted action by the international community against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. The various international conventions, which are the expression of the wish of the international community to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, must be backed up in practice by export control measures. It is essential that exporting States assume their responsibilities and take measures to ensure that exports of sensitive materials, equipment and technologies are subject to an appropriate system of surveillance and control. An appropriate system of export controls makes it easier for the technological development of the countries concerned to be pursued on a cooperative basis by ensuring that partners can have confidence that goods, technology and materials will only be used for peaceful purposes.

Like the standardized reporting system on military expenditure, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an essential, global instrument for promoting transparency in conventional armaments and confidence-building between States. The EU therefore considers it of great importance that all States should submit regular returns of their imports and exports in the seven categories of the Register. Even the submission of a "nil" return, in cases where no arms transfers have taken place, contributes to transparency. The value of the Register will of course be increased if participation is as broad as possible. The Union reiterates its call on all States to submit timely returns, including — to further increase transparency and strengthen the value of the Register — information on military holdings and procurement through national production. The EU would support a decision by the Conference on Disarmament in 1999 to reappoint a special coordinator on transparency in armaments to further investigate, in an ad hoc committee, possible measures in the field of transparency in armaments with a view to building confidence and enhancing security between States.

Pursuant to last year's resolution on the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures, a group of interested countries was established in order to exchange information and coordinate concrete activities and projects. This valuable initiative represents an important step that goes beyond an abstract consideration of the complex subject of the role of disarmament in post-conflict situations and crisis prevention, and takes concrete action.

The Council of the European Union adopted on 8 June 1998 a Code of Conduct on arms exports. Building on the common criteria for arms exports defined by the European Council in 1991 and 1992, the Code aims at setting high common standards for the management of, and restraint in, conventional arms transfers by all member States and strengthening the exchange of relevant information with a view to achieving greater transparency. European Union member States will use their best endeavours to encourage other arms-exporting States to subscribe to the principles and criteria of the Code of Conduct.

The European Union is currently engaged in implementing the EU Programme for preventing and combating illicit trafficking in conventional arms adopted by the Council on 26 June 1997, which set the framework for the Union's action, in particular to assist third countries to prevent and combat the illicit trafficking of arms and to assist affected countries, particularly in post-conflict situations, to suppress the illicit circulation and trafficking of arms, with special emphasis on small arms. The European Union is of the view that a serious challenge is presented to the international community by the combination of internal conflict and the proliferation of small arms, and it welcomes the re-establishment of the small arms Panel to continue within the United Nations the work already started.

The European Union encourages the group of experts to formulate a recommendation on the objectives, scope and timing of an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects in time for consideration by the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. The European Union has also initiated discussions on further measures on small arms in the framework of its common policy. In this context the Union calls upon all States to make every effort so as to enable the United Nations Disarmament Commission during its 1999 session to reach consensus and adopt guidelines on a comprehensive and integrated approach towards the consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to the goal of the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines worldwide and of contributing to solving problems already caused by these weapons. The Union welcomed the opening for signature in Ottawa on 3 and 4 December 1997 of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, and the efforts made by its signatories to promote universal accession to the Convention. We are pleased that 130 countries have now signed and that within a very short space of time the trigger point of 40 ratifications has been reached so that the Convention will enter into force on 1 March 1999.

On the eve of the Ottawa Conference, on 28 November 1997, the European Union Conference adopted a new joint action on anti-personnel landmines in which the Union reiterates its commitment and establishes a common moratorium on the production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. All EU member States should take appropriate steps to comply with the objectives of the Ottawa Convention pending its entry into force, and undertake to participate actively in the conferences to be organized after the signature of the Convention. In addition, the Union will seek to promote, in all the appropriate forums, including the Conference on Disarmament, all efforts likely to contribute to the joint action objectives.

In parallel, the joint action sets out the framework for specific actions and financial contributions by the Union to mine action. In the period 1993 to 1997 the Union contributed $140 million to demining activities and assistance to victims. That amount does not include individual contributions by EU member States. In 1998 the Union plans to increase its already considerable efforts by earmarking $60 million for demining and victim assistance initiatives. That makes the European Union the world's major donor in these areas. It is in this spirit that the Union confirms its intention to continue working actively to promote the efforts of the international community towards the complete elimination of anti-personnel landmines. To that end the Union believes that in order to allocate and use more efficiently the resources made available in the fight against anti-personnel landmines, improved international coordination is essential. The EU supports the central coordinating role of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian mine action worldwide, welcomes the creation of the United Nations Mine Action Service and welcomes all efforts to achieve a more coherent response within the United Nations and beyond to the challenge posed by the many millions of anti-personnel landmines.

The European Union looks forward to the entry into force on 3 December 1998 of amended Protocol II to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects. The Union also welcomes the entry into force on 30 July 1998 of Protocol IV on blinding laser weapons. It calls upon all States that have not yet done so to become parties to the Convention and the protocols attached thereto, in particular, amended Protocol II and Protocol IV.

In June 1996 the Union welcomed the decision of the Conference on Disarmament to admit new members, some of which are member States of the Union. It also welcomes the fact that in its resolution 52/40 A the General Assembly encouraged the Conference on Disarmament to continue the further review of its membership. This year also a Special Coordinator on the expansion of Conference on Disarmament membership was appointed and his report was submitted to the Conference on Disarmament. As consensus was not reached, the EU considers it necessary to reappoint a special coordinator at the beginning of the 1999 session of the Conference on Disarmament to continue consultations on this issue. The EU will continue its efforts to support the candidature of the five member States and four associated countries which have applied for admission.

Significant progress was made during the substantive session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission this spring to reach a consensus on the objectives and agenda of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). The EU regrets the fact that despite this progress no agreement has yet been reached. The European Union reaffirms its conviction that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/38 F, SSOD IV should be convened only after the emergence of a consensus on its objectives and agenda. The Union stands ready to work constructively towards such a consensus.

The European Union welcomes the important decisions taken by the General Assembly at its fifty-second session on the rationalization of the work and reform of the agenda of the First Committee and on the revitalization, rationalization and streamlining of the work of the Disarmament Commission. But the EU regrets that only limited steps could be agreed. Reform of the First Committee remains a priority. The EU will work for consensus on further rationalization of the Committee's work to be reached at this session. Reform, as we understand it, is an ongoing process and further steps should follow the achievements recently made.

Mr. Bune (Fiji): My delegation is happy to see you, Sir, presiding over the work of the Committee at this fifty-third session and extends to you our warm congratulations. We assure you and other members of the Bureau of our full support and cooperation. We also salute the excellent work of your predecessor, Mr. Nkgowe of Botswana, and wish to thank the Secretary-General for the important statement he made to the Committee this morning.

Disarmament and international security remain one of the cornerstones of the United Nations. A culture of peace and international security is the sine qua non for accelerated international action and cooperation in such critical areas as economic, social and human development. Secure and lasting peace and international security are all basic and fundamental to fashioning a better world for every nation-State. Over the past year the international community has been inundated with platitudinous statements calling for prompt and effective disarmament. The words, however, have not been matched by deeds. Despite the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), nuclear tests were carried out earlier this year by India and Pakistan. They were underground tests. We do not know how many simulated tests have been carried out with state-of-the-art computer technology by other nuclear-weapon States.

It seems clear that if we are to make any significant strides towards prompt and effective disarmament and international security, we must create more effective measures to reduce and ultimately eliminate all weapons of mass destruction.

We must pursue with political will and alacrity the universality of existing instruments or they will be meaningless. We must create mechanisms to ensure their effective implementation.

In the area of nuclear weapons the international community must cooperate and collaborate to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons simultaneously. As a first step towards reducing nuclear weapons Fiji calls on all nuclear-weapon States to immediately halt the production and testing, in whatever form, of nuclear weapons.

We also call on all nuclear-weapon States to destroy all stockpiles of nuclear weapons, and we urge all States to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We particularly enjoin India and Pakistan to do so. Not only should we make the treaties universal, but we must also ensure the effective implementation of such legal instruments or posterity may well classify us as a roost of procrastinators.

Fiji believes that nuclear-weapon States must demonstrate their obligations to, and fulfilment of, the provisions of the NPT. In that regard, the NPT review process must be qualitatively different and a much more forward-looking exercise.

The CTBT Treaty has been signed so far by 150 countries, but it has been ratified by only 25, of which Fiji is one. Thirty-two Member States of the 44 listed in annex 2 of the Convention are yet to ratify the Treaty in order for it to enter into force. We accordingly urge all States that have signed the Treaty to ratify it as well if it is to become an effective instrument for nuclear disarmament.

Fiji considers the START process to be an important part of the matrix of reduction and elimination and strongly urges that the process be energized and widened to include other nuclear-weapon States.

The creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in many parts of the world has greatly assisted our initiatives to establish a nuclear-weapon-free world. We continue to urge all countries in such zones to become parties to the regional initiative and where such zones do not now exist, we urge their creation. The NPT and the CTBT are but steps along the path to the total elimination of all nuclear weapons from our planet. To achieve the end result we must now work towards the negotiation and conclusion of a treaty for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world within a specified time framework. Our delegation hopes that significant progress will be made in the Conference on Disarmament.

Associated with our endeavours for complete nuclear disarmament is the question of the production and transfer

of fissile materials for the manufacture of nuclear weapons. A ban on the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons purposes needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. We should make every effort within the Conference on Disarmament to establish a fissile material inventory and to commence negotiation as soon as possible on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) came into force last year. The Convention, however, lacks universality. We accordingly call on all States, especially States which possess, produce, or have the capacity to produce, chemical weapons to become parties to the Convention. We also call for the full implementation of the provisions of the Convention.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) also lacks universality. We continue to call on all States which have not already done so to become parties to the Convention. We also call for the early conclusion of the verification protocol and for the full commitment and substantial participation of all parties to ensure the full implementation of the Treaty.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction now exists, and appropriately so, for my delegation continues to submit that these weapons are an abomination in our world and ought to be totally eliminated from the armaments of countries. Our country has signed the Convention, and we call on all those which have not already done so to join the vast majority of Member States in signing the Convention. We urge all States which have not yet done so to ratify it. The international community must in the meantime cooperate and collaborate in the removal and elimination of the millions of landmines placed in various parts of the world, and at the same time advance the care, rehabilitation and social and economic reintegration of landmine victims. Simultaneously we must act collectively and unambiguously to end the use, production and stockpiling of anti-personnel mines.

It is a sad reflection on our times that human tragedies in several nation-States today result from conventional weapons. Conventional weapons, especially small arms and light weapons, have played havoc in several countries in Africa and Eastern Europe. The proliferation in the production, sale and transfer of conventional weapons has led to incidents of genocide and ethnic cleansing. High priority should therefore be given to the preparation and promulgation of strategies and policies aimed at preventing the proliferation of the supply of conventional weapons and, in particular, limiting their flow to areas of conflict. Fiji fully supports the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and trusts that the report of the Panel will be given the prompt and serious attention it deserves in the Conference on Disarmament and within the Department for Disarmament Affairs. We also urge all Member States to fully support and participate in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The Register is an effective instrument in facilitating transparency. We would like to see adjustments broadening the categories of weapons covered by the Register in order to ensure that it is more relevant.

The incidence of intra-State conflicts constitutes a threat to peace and security. Those conflicts not only give rise to the large-scale displacement of persons and to genocide but also result in massive transboundary refugee flows which impact severely on social and economic conditions within receiving countries. My delegation therefore welcomes and supports current efforts aimed at promoting confidence-building measures at the regional and subregional levels in order to ease tensions and conflicts.

At the same time, we must fully institute organized and structured arrangements to prevent conflicts instead of reacting to them after they have started. We therefore renew our call for the establishment of a permanent mechanism or division of preventive diplomacy within the United Nations that can respond promptly, positively and actively to threats of potential conflict and genocide. Such a division should have the capacity to receive, collate, analyse and interpret intelligence information and reports with a view to the early detection of potential conflicts and early reactions to such detection in order to minimize, contain and resolve such threats in collaboration with relevant Member States.

In conclusion, our delegation urges the international community and individual countries to pursue a culture of peace and international security and to eschew a culture of war and conflict.

Mr. Goosen (South Africa): Please accept my delegation's congratulations, Sir, on your assumption of the chair of the First Committee of the General Assembly during its fifty-third session. I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you and your

Bureau lead the work of the Committee to a successful conclusion.

At last year's First Committee session South Africa categorized 1997 as a year in which the international community, while being able to demonstrate several accomplishments in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament, was unable to grasp the opportunities that were available.

It was our stated hope that 1998 would prove to be more productive, and that at this session of the General Assembly we would all be in a position to look back over a year during which we would not only have continued to develop the work in our areas of accomplishment, but when we would also be in a position to look forward to the prospect of building on new foundations addressing issues of importance.

Despite the positive work being done in the context of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC); the agreement in the Conference on Disarmament to negotiate a fissile materials treaty; the outcome of the summit meeting between the Presidents of the United States and the Russian Federation; the Strategic Defence Review undertaken by the United Kingdom and the indications of transparency which that contains; the imminent entry into force of both the Convention on the total banning of anti-personnel mines and the amended Protocol II of the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW); 1998 has also been a year of disturbing developments, especially in the areas of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, developments which will have a significant impact as we attempt to chart a course into the next millennium, a course which will ensure that the peoples of the world can live in a safer and more secure environment without the threat of weapons of mass destruction and excessive accumulations of conventional arms and light weapons clouding their existence.

The nuclear test explosions conducted in South Asia and their potential impact on nuclear disarmament were of considerable concern to my Government. We have expressed ourselves on this issue and I here reiterate the statements that have been made by the South African Government. South Africa has also joined in a number of initiatives, including at the Conference on Disarmament and at the recently held General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), to express our concern. We continue to call on India and Pakistan to exercise maximum restraint and to continue their dialogue to promote mutual confidence. My Government is also on record as welcoming the General Assembly statements by the Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India in which they indicated progress in their becoming parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

Our opposition to nuclear tests is not only a reflection of the views of the South African Government but is a long sought after goal of the international community as a whole, which had hoped that the conclusion of the CTBT would remove this phenomenon from our midst. It should also be noted that as a country which has itself stepped away from the nuclear-weapons abyss and as a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), we are firmly committed to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and to their complete elimination. As long as a single nuclear weapon remains in existence it is our belief that these weapons constitute a threat to humanity.

A source of concern for South Africa this year has also been the continuing refusal to recognize that the entire international community has an interest in and a concern about nuclear disarmament, a refusal which has *inter alia* led to an inability to have this interest and concern accommodated in such forums as the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and the strengthened review process of the NPT. This is also despite the fact that South Africa and many other participants in these meetings have made it clear that these proposals are being made and would be undertaken without undermining or threatening the nuclear disarmament negotiations between the Russian Federation and the United States, which would continue to be of paramount importance to the reduction of nuclear weapons and their eventual elimination — as would future negotiations involving the other three nuclear-weapon States. What is being sought is for the international community, represented by the Conference on Disarmament and the NPT, to have focused deliberations on the practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons.

The concern that I have outlined here was further exacerbated by the unsuccessful conclusion of the second meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT review conference. South Africa will continue to pursue the proposals it made at the 1998 Preparatory Committee when the Committee meets again next year. It is also our hope that the Preparatory Committee at its 1999 session will

regain the ground that has been lost and will successfully conclude its work. We will work together with all our NPT partners to attain this objective, especially in view of the new challenge that has confronted us.

President Nelson Mandela, addressing this session of the General Assembly, gave a clear exposition of the South African positions on nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. He recalled that the first resolution of the General Assembly sought to address the challenge of

> "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction". (*resolution 1 (I), para. 5 (c)*)

But he went on to note that after countless initiatives and resolutions the international community still does not have concrete and generally accepted proposals, supported by a clear commitment by the nuclear-weapon States, for the speedy, final and total elimination of nuclear weapons and nuclear-weapons capabilities.

President Mandela saluted — as we also do today — Brazil's decision to accede to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and urged all others that had not yet done so to follow that excellent example. He asked the question, while admitting that it might sound naive to those who had elaborated sophisticated arguments to justify their refusal to eliminate these terrible and terrifying weapons of mass destruction, "why do they need them, anyway?" (*A/53/PV.7, p. 15*). President Mandela stated that in reality no rational answer could be advanced to explain in a satisfactory manner what in the end was a consequence of cold war inertia and an attachment to the use of the threat of brute force to assert the primacy of some States over others.

It is also a pleasure for me to bring to the Committee's attention, as the Ambassador of Mexico did earlier today, the fact that, together with its partners in the 9 June 1998 joint ministerial declaration on the need for a new agenda to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world — Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia and Sweden — South Africa will be presenting a draft resolution (A/C.1/53/L.48) for consideration by the First Committee. The Declaration and draft resolution are intended to put forward a realistic and achievable agenda for the attainment of nuclear disarmament. It is intended to identify the middle ground and to avoid the trap of inaction created by the two poles which have for too long dominated the nuclear disarmament debate and which have only delivered further polarization and demonstrated a paucity of results.

The time has come to look at a new approach that would unite the middle ground trapped between the maximalist and minimalist positions. This approach would need squarely to recognize the challenges facing us; would not deny the steps that have been and are continuing to be taken; would not avoid difficult issues, while also not seeking confrontation; and would seek to form the basis for a common approach for the achievement of the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons through existing unilateral and bilateral processes and through complementary and mutually reinforcing steps at the plurilateral and multilateral levels.

President Nelson Mandela, when announcing South Africa's participation in this initiative, stated forthrightly that the draft resolution, which is appropriately entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda", is an honest attempt to contribute to the definition of the systematic and progressive steps required to eliminate nuclear weapons and the threat of annihilation which they pose. He called on all Members of the United Nations seriously to consider this important draft resolution and to give it their support.

I should now like to turn to a number of other important issues which South Africa wishes to highlight and which will be dealt with during the course of our deliberations.

South Africa welcomed the decision taken at the Conference on Disarmament to establish the Ad Hoc Committee under item 1 of the agenda, entitled "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", a Committee that will be negotiating the fissile materials treaty on the basis of the Shannon Report (CD/1299) and the mandate contained therein. The commencement and early conclusion of the fissile materials treaty negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament has long been an objective of the South African Government. The fissile materials treaty, as the next major multilateral negotiation following the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, is an integral part of the nuclear disarmament section of the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted at the 1995 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference. South Africa sees the negotiations on a fissile materials treaty as being of particular importance given the key nature of fissile material as a component of nuclear weapons.

From our perspective, the negotiations that the Conference on Disarmament is about to commence lie at the heart of the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation issue. By achieving control over fissile material for weapons purposes we will not only be in a position to prevent the production of further nuclear weapons, but we will also be in a position to lay the groundwork for their eventual elimination. South Africa's approach to the negotiations for a fissile material treaty will be based on the objective that the treaty to be negotiated must be an integral measure of both nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. While recognizing the difficulties that surround the issues relating to existing military stockpiles of fissile material, we intend to raise the stockpiles issue, as is provided for in the Shannon Report, and will, together with the other members of the Conference on Disarmament, seek the most appropriate ways of dealing with the matter.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Preparatory Committee and its provisional technical secretariat continue to make significant strides in the implementation of the Treaty's verification regime. South Africa lends its voice to the voices of other States in calling for all States to sign the Treaty and to work constructively for its earliest entry into force. As I have already said, South Africa welcomes the recent statement by Pakistan about its readiness to sign the CTBT and the statement by India about its willingness to continue its discussions on the signing of that Treaty.

South Africa will also continue to use its participation in the First Committee to further reinforce its support for initiatives to increase the area of the world covered by nuclear-weapon-free zones. We will also continue to give our support to the initiative to promote the southern hemisphere as a zone free from nuclear weapons.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) serves as an example of the work that can be achieved by the international community within the disarmament context. My delegation has noted with satisfaction the success of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in implementing the Convention by conducting successful inspections among member States, and the cooperation that has been extended by the States Parties in this regard. South Africa also welcomes the increasing number of ratifications of the CWC and further calls on all States which have not done so to ratify or accede to the CWC in order to broaden its universal application.

The intensification of the work of the BWC Ad Hoc Group, which has clearly been demonstrated by the negotiators this year and by their agreement on an intensive work programme for 1999, is also to be welcomed. South Africa is fully committed to these negotiations and to achieving a protocol that will be effective in strengthening the Convention's implementation. The conclusion of the work of the Ad Hoc Group will, however, depend on the continued commitment and substantive, as well as flexible, participation of all States Parties to the Treaty. We are convinced that the Ad Hoc Group will be able to complete its work within the time-frame agreed at the Treaty's last Review Conference.

While arms control has traditionally focused on conventional arms and weapons of mass destruction, the devastation wrought by the proliferation of light weapons and small arms on socio-economic development generally, and specifically in the reconstruction of post-conflict societies, can no longer be ignored. Unimpeded access to and the use of light weapons and small arms within States has increased the lethality of crime, violence, banditry and civil disobedience. The demobilization of ex-combatants, disarmament programmes and other initiatives in regions which have suffered through conflict situations are constrained by the existence of large amounts of these weapons which are poorly regulated and indiscriminately used. The diffusion of existing stocks and the flow of new weapons endanger the democratic transformations that are being sought and have a negative influence on the ability of Governments to govern effectively.

The challenge in addressing the proliferation of light weapons and small arms is to marshal the necessary human and financial resources, encouraging the sharing of reliable data among national departments and regional partners, coordinating action, and, by raising the profile of the issue, to gain the support of Governments, politicians and non-governmental organizations. Furthermore, the illicit proliferation of small arms is closely linked to other criminal activities and therefore must be addressed within the context of initiatives aimed at reducing crime. The close link between licit and illicit weapons must also be recognized and approaches to addressing the one must relate to the other, both within countries and in regional initiatives.

South Africa therefore believes that a holistic approach is necessary to address this problem. Concurrent action must be taken at national, regional and international levels, focusing both on licit and illicit small arms and light weapons. To reinforce national action it is imperative that

a regional approach, addressing the concerns of individual regions and adopting an incremental approach, should be formulated to address the problem of uncontrolled proliferation of these weapons. This will ensure that as each region of the world develops an indigenous approach, the building blocks will be put in place to effectively deal with this issue globally.

The focus areas in all instances should therefore be placed on illicit and licit small arms and light weapons. National and regional approaches must be developed for both short-term and long-term gains. At the national level efforts should be focused on enhancing legislation and regulation to prevent legal arms from becoming illegal through criminal activity; improving as necessary the regulation of the importation, export and transfer of light weapons and small arms; and by increasing the control over stocks of light weapons belonging to security forces. Steps should also be taken to reduce the number of existing weapons through voluntary methods and increasing the capacity of security forces to identify, seize and destroy illicit weapons.

Regionally, an important confidence-building measure that would lead to long-term gains for regional cooperation and trust is greater transparency by countries in their transfers of small arms and light weapons. In affected regions, States and regional organizations should also take immediate steps to stop the inflow of these weapons through increased cooperation, harmonization of transfer procedures, tighter border control and intelligence-sharing. Attention should also be focused on the recirculation of existing stocks throughout the region, and appropriate control measures should be devised, including increased cooperation between Governments, joint operations and harmonization of priorities.

A cooperative partnership should be established between Governments, international and regional organizations and the non-governmental community, to mobilize public and political support. The role of the non-governmental community in assisting Governments to achieve this support and aiding in the compilation of reliable data regarding small arms and light weapons proliferation in all its aspects should be explored fully. It is South Africa's view that an international conference on small arms and light weapons should be held after 1999 to enable Governments and regional organizations to share their experiences and facilitate dialogue. The aim of the conference should be to increase cooperation and avoid duplication of initiatives to ensure that scarce resources are used effectively. The conference should formulate an action plan to combat this proliferation problem based on the experiences of indigenous regional approaches in this regard. Such regional approaches will have put in place measures that will allow us effectively to deal with this issue globally.

During this session of the First Committee my delegation will continue to support draft resolutions dealing with the conventional arms, small arms and light weapons issues, using as a basis for our participation the views that I have outlined. In this context, it is also important to note that South Africa continues to encourage all Members of the United Nations to support and regularly participate in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The Register remains a very important tool in building transparency and confidence.

South Africa was delighted when Burkina Faso deposited the fortieth ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, triggering the Ottawa treaty's entry-into-force mechanism. The next significant milestone in the fulfilment and implementation of all the objectives of the treaty will be the first meeting of States parties. South Africa would here like to take the opportunity of welcoming and giving its support to the offer made by the Foreign Minister of Mozambique during the general debate in the General Assembly for his country to be the venue of the first meeting of States parties. We give this support not only because Mozambique is a close neighbour and friend, but also because holding the meeting in one of the countries which have been the most afflicted by the scourge of anti-personnel landmines will serve as a further reminder to all members of the international community of how these weapons are devastating the lives of innocent civilians around the world. South Africa will work closely and actively with Mozambique and with the other members of the treaty to encourage those States that have not yet done so to sign and ratify it in order that they will be in a position to join us in Maputo as full members of the international norm against the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and on their destruction.

As the delegations participating in the First Committee debate, formulate and adopt resolutions that will guide us and our work during 1999, South Africa remains committed to working in this Committee, and in all other disarmament and non-proliferation forums, to achieve our common goal of eliminating all weapons of mass destruction and limiting the numbers of conventional weapons, small arms and light

weapons to those required for self-defence and other legitimate uses.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): The Bangladesh delegation warmly felicitates you, Sir, on your election to the chair and offers you its fullest cooperation. We thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his comprehensive statement earlier this morning.

The contemporary international political climate has elements that can be propitious for disarmament. A broad consensus on some key issues is emerging. These existing opportunities must be seized. New approaches towards arms limitation and disarmament must be explored while we steer clear of outmoded strategy concepts and doctrines of the past.

There now exists a perceptible and indeed expanding international consensus that favours the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. The Hague appeal for peace, calling for delegitimization of war, reflects the conscience of mankind. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC), and the imminent entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction are landmark achievements in this sphere in current times. The agreement finally reached on starting negotiations for a fissile material cut-off treaty is also a step forward.

In many ways this is a critical watershed point. Capabilities enjoin responsibilities. We urge all nuclear-weapon States and the nuclear-weapon-capable States in all regions to pursue in good faith negotiations leading to the ultimate goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. The hands of the doomsday clock should not be allowed to move forward again.

Bangladesh's commitment to the goal of general and complete disarmament is unequivocal. Indeed, it is with us a constitutional obligation. Our adherence to major disarmament treaties flows from this. It is also for this reason, among others, that we accord such high priority to nuclear disarmament. To this end we have supported, as we shall continue to support, all efforts leading towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The NPT called for negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the elimination of nuclear weapons at an early date. That was in 1968. Today, 30 years later, the international community is yet to agree on a time-bound elimination of nuclear weapons. Even General Assembly resolutions have urged the Conference on Disarmament to commence negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework through legally binding instruments.

The Conference on Disarmament must heed these aspirations of the global community. Bangladesh is of the view that substantive negotiations on total and comprehensive nuclear disarmament should commence forthwith in the Conference on Disarmament. An ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament must be set up to address this crucial issue.

The use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is contrary to international law. Bangladesh attaches high importance to security assurances, which are a matter of great interest to all non-nuclear States. Indeed, they are an essential element in keeping them that way. The total elimination of nuclear weapons undoubtedly remains the best security assurance against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. We welcome in this regard the re-establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of the Ad Hoc Committee on negative security assurances.

As an active member of the Conference on Disarmament Bangladesh remains committed to contributing to discussions, deliberations, debate and substantive negotiations on a broad range of disarmament and non-proliferation issues.

The prevention of an arms race in outer space is an issue which of late has gained appropriate attention in the Conference. Outer space is the common heritage of mankind, which should be used for peaceful purposes benefiting all nations. This final frontier should be spared the experience of a self-defeating arms race. Bangladesh therefore supports all efforts towards an international agreement preventing the weaponization of outer space.

The entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, with its sophisticated verification regime, has strengthened our resolve to reinforce the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC) with similar verification mechanisms. Bangladesh attaches considerable significance

to the work of the Ad Hoc Group which is mandated to negotiate a protocol to strengthen the Convention by developing effective verification and compliance mechanisms. Bangladesh welcomed the initiative of Australia to convene an informal meeting on this in New York last month, and joined with others in issuing a forward-looking Declaration. There appears to exist sufficient political will, and we believe the Ad Hoc Group will be able to fulfil its mandate within the agreed time-frame.

The open sale of small arms is a matter of serious concern. While the major armies of the world are disarming civilians are rearming. If these weapons are not properly controlled peace will not be a reality in the true sense in our lives. The excessive and destabilizing accumulation and transfer of small arms has led to enormous human tragedies and economic and social problems. These problems are exacerbated by the absence of global norms, or standards, to be used in deducing such accumulation or transfer. It is imperative that the international community address this problem as a matter of the utmost importance and urgency.

One approach to this problem would be to seek to build a global consensus on monitoring and controlling illicit arms transfers and their links with trafficking in other contraband goods. The holding of a United Nations conference on all aspects of the illicit arms trade in the near future would be an important step in that direction. The initiative that was taken by the Foreign Ministers of Norway and Canada to hold an informal session on the trafficking and illicit use of small arms last month in the United Nations is indeed laudable.

We call for the early convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. It is time that the international community reviewed the implementation of the Final Document of the tenth special session of the General Assembly — the first special session devoted to disarmament — as well as the outcomes of the subsequent special sessions, and took stock of the international security and disarmament situation in the post-cold-war era. While nuclear disarmament should remain our highest priority, we have to identify the emerging challenges presented by the new era and to formulate an agreed plan of action to deal with these in the true spirit of multilateralism. We believe that only a special session of the General Assembly can address the subject of disarmament, taking into account in particular its relationship with development, with such comprehensiveness and thoroughness as it deserves.

The First Committee of the General Assembly is focused on the furtherance of one of the fundamental objectives of the United Nations, the maintenance of international peace and security. The strengthening of United Nations competence in the field of disarmament would therefore require effective coordination between this Committee, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. The non-governmental organizations interested in this field play an important advocacy and awareness-raising role in promoting the cause of global disarmament. The valuable inputs of civil society can be put to much better use through the well-defined arrangement of constructive coordination between that society and the United Nations. We are pleased with the creation of a Department for Disarmament Affairs and want it to take a very proactive role in the sphere of disarmament. One area for such a role would be to activate the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament. We believe that the operations of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific should move to the region soon. There is no justification for the Centre's being run from New York. Financial constraints arguments do not seem plausible.

In the First Committee, as in the Conference on Disarmament, Bangladesh has always pursued a balanced and constructive posture, viewing issues on their merits rather than basing ourselves on prior positions. At the present session we will continue to follow that tradition.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): My delegation is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over the First Committee during this fifty-third session of the General Assembly. We are confident that given your well-known skills and expertise, you will be able to steer the work of the Committee to a fruitful conclusion. My delegation extends its fullest support and cooperation towards that end.

We thank the Secretary-General for the important and focused remarks he made to the Committee this morning.

The situation on the disarmament front in the past year has been a rather dismal one. This was noted by the Non-Aligned Movement summit meeting in its Final Document, to which my delegation fully subscribes and supports. There has been an important breakthrough in the area of conventional disarmament, in the form of the successful and laudable signing of the Convention on landmines, but there has been no discernible progress in the area of nuclear disarmament. The nuclear Powers continue to take the attitude that the issue of nuclear disarmament is best left

to them to negotiate. Yet to date there has been no real progress on that front. The START II process continues to be in limbo, awaiting ratification by the Russian Duma. Until that happens there will be no further movement in the direction of START III.

In the meantime there has been a further setback following the series of nuclear tests that were carried out in South Asia. These tests are a matter of serious regional and global concern as they carry with them the dangerous prospects of nuclear proliferation, thereby undermining the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). These tests should serve as a wake-up call for the international community, especially the nuclear-weapon States, to exert every effort to ensure that the proliferation of nuclear weapons is stopped at all costs, and immediately. A constructive approach on their part would be for them to cease all activities pertaining to the vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons, a loophole which they negotiated for themselves in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). They cannot hope to fully convince the non-nuclear-weapon States that their security is best served by forswearing nuclear weapons when they, the nuclear-weapon States themselves, not only continue to keep them in large numbers but continue to "improve" the destructive power of these weapons of mass destruction.

It is an undeniable fact that, whether we like it or not, there are today seven declared nuclear-weapon States. There is at least one undeclared nuclear-weapon State and perhaps there are a few others which aspire to join the club for reasons of national security, if not prestige. It is, therefore, imperative for the tests in South Asia to be seen not purely in terms of a regional dynamic, and rationalized as such, but in the overall context of global nuclear disarmament, which should be addressed globally. The nuclear-weapon States have a particular responsibility to respond appropriately to this development. They must demonstrate in a convincing way their strong and continued commitment to the goals of nuclear disarmament as embodied in the NPT, by embarking on serious negotiations towards the reduction of their nuclear arsenals, leading to their ultimate elimination. Their clear obligations in this respect, particularly under article VI of the NPT, have been clearly asserted by the International Court of Justice in its advisory opinion on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*. Unless there is a clear perception, especially by States aspiring to nuclear capability, that the nuclear-weapon States are serious in their intention to achieve the goals of nuclear disarmament, the world will, willy-nilly, slide down the path of nuclear proliferation.

My delegation therefore urges the nuclear-weapon States to take a more constructive attitude towards meeting their obligations and responsibilities under both the NPT and the CTBT and demonstrate unambiguously their commitment to achieve all the goals of nuclear disarmament. It would be helpful if they began by evincing a more cooperative approach to nuclear disarmament initiatives taken by the non-nuclear-weapon States, rather than dismissing them, as they have been wont to do until now, as unrealistic and naive efforts on the part of the nuclear "have-nots".

Efforts should also be made to forge a cooperative rather than an adversarial approach in nuclear disarmament. Such an approach would at least ensure a more productive outcome at the next NPT Preparatory Committee session than, regrettably, was the case at the last, thereby paving the way for a successful review process of the NPT in the year 2000. This is essential in an effort to arrest further erosion of confidence in the Treaty, which is already beginning to appear in some quarters.

The NPT review process should seriously address the quantitative and qualitative aspects of nuclear disarmament, lack of real progress in nuclear disarmament and accountability of the nuclear-weapon States in respect of both the review process and full implementation of the NPT. In the wake of recent developments, efforts must be made to further strengthen this important non-proliferation regime. The alternative is fraught with unacceptable risks.

At the same time, greater efforts should be made to ensure early ratification of the CTBT so as to pave the way for its entry into force by the target date. My delegation welcomes the ratification of the Treaty by the United Kingdom and France. It welcomes, in particular, the willingness of both India and Pakistan to sign the Treaty within a year and hopes that this undertaking will be fulfilled. My delegation urges the other parties concerned to ratify the Treaty without delay. This is imperative if it is to be an effective instrument in banning nuclear tests for all time. For its part, Malaysia signed the Treaty in July this year as a reaffirmation of its consistent support for nuclear disarmament measures and steps are being taken for its ratification in spite of our unhappiness over certain aspects of the Treaty. As part of the international monitoring system of the Treaty, Malaysia will be hosting a radionuclide monitoring station, with the Malaysian Institute of Nuclear Technology Research acting as the national agency for overseeing the implementation of the requirements of the Treaty. As in the case of the NPT,

every effort should also be made towards securing universal adherence to the CTBT.

In contributing to the nuclear disarmament process my delegation, through the draft resolution pertaining to the ICJ advisory opinion on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons* which it has initiated in the past two years and will again initiate at this session of the General Assembly, has called for the commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament that will eventually lead to the conclusion of a nuclear-weapons convention. In the wake of the criminalization of all activities relating to chemical and biological weapons through specific conventions, it is only logical and appropriate that a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons, the most catastrophic weapons of mass destruction imaginable, should be aimed at in the long term, in the interest of ensuring the continued survival of the human species on this planet. While a model draft convention, prepared by leading international nuclear disarmament experts is already in circulation as a basis of discussion, my delegation is not suggesting immediate negotiations on such a convention at this stage. We believe the road towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons will be a long and arduous one and will be best travelled through a series of well-defined stages, accompanied by proper verification and control mechanisms. Such an approach is, therefore, not incompatible with the step-by-step, incremental approaches already mooted by others, including the Non-Aligned Movement, and should therefore be looked at with a positive and constructive attitude by the nuclear-weapon States. My delegation will have more to say on this in the Committee when it initiates its draft resolution on the ICJ advisory opinion on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*.

Towards that ultimate goal negotiations should be stepped up on the various aspects of nuclear disarmament at the Conference on Disarmament. Regrettably, the Conference on Disarmament has remained stalemated on the issue of establishing an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. We welcome, however, its recent decision to establish two Ad Hoc Committees, one dealing with fissile material cut-off and the other pertaining to negative security assurances. We earnestly hope that the two Ad Hoc Committees will be re-established every year almost automatically and that all the parties concerned will negotiate in good faith in the coming months and years so as to enable early agreement to be arrived at on these two important aspects of nuclear disarmament. Malaysia is keen to play an active and constructive role in these negotiations and looks forward to its early admission as a full member of the Conference on Disarmament.

My delegation is particularly concerned about the inherent danger of a thermonuclear war triggered by accident or through terrorism. This should provide a further incentive for the international community to work towards the rapid reduction and early elimination of nuclear weapons. In the meantime, efforts should be made to avoid or eliminate such risks. In this regard my delegation welcomes the proposal made by the Canberra Commission, and supported by the recent eight-nation initiative here in the United Nations, to dealert all nuclear forces. We welcome in particular what amounts to a dealerting posture taken by the United Kingdom in respect of its submarine-based nuclear forces. It should be lauded as a positive contribution, especially in the context of reducing the possibility of nuclear war by accident. At the same time, we call on countries possessing nuclear weapons to enhance the security of their nuclear facilities through more stringent national, physical and technical means and/or international cooperation.

While the main disarmament focus should remain on nuclear disarmament, the proliferation of small arms, which has grown out of proportion in recent years, is a matter of serious concern to my delegation and is one of the most challenging issues with which the international community will have to come to grips. While they have a role in legitimate national defence, their proliferation destabilizes societies and spawns terrorism. The international community should intensify cooperation in controlling the flow of these weapons through increased efforts at transparency, such as through the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, in which more than 90 countries, including my own, participate. My delegation supports efforts to promote the universal use of the Register. We also support the proposal to increase public awareness of the problem of small arms through the convening of an international conference.

Malaysia welcomes the impending entry into force of the Ottawa treaty banning anti-personnel landmines with the deposition of the fortieth instrument of ratification at the United Nations recently. We hail the promptness with which the Treaty comes into force, less than a year after it was opened for signature, which is indeed a remarkable achievement reflecting overwhelming universal support for the treaty. Malaysia, which was among the initial signatories to the Treaty, is taking steps towards its early ratification.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to pay tribute to the Department for Disarmament Affairs under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General Jayantha Dhanapala.

Under his able and dynamic stewardship the Department has successfully refocused the attention of the Organization on the important issue of disarmament in a way that has not been possible in recent years. We believe the newly revamped and upgraded Department will make an important contribution to the Secretary-General's efforts to inculcate a new culture of global peace, which he has so eloquently articulated and in which process the United Nations will play a pivotal role. We wish the Department every success and extend our fullest support and cooperation in its various activities.

These are some of my delegation's comments on several aspects of the issues before us. It is not comprehensive in its coverage as we intend to make additional specific comments on other aspects of the disarmament issue in the course of our debate.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation would like to start by expressing to you, Mr. Chairman, our warmest congratulations on your election to lead the First Committee. We are convinced that under your wise guidance our work will be very successful. You can rely on our firm support to that end. We extend our congratulations also to the other members of the Bureau.

At the same time, my delegation wishes to express its most sincere thanks to Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe for his very able and efficient guidance of the Committee during the fifty-second session.

Many of the expectations created by the end of the cold war have now faded. Regrettably, some factors and doctrines that fuelled the East-West confrontation have survived the changes in the international system. Nuclear weapons, which have never had any justification and still have no justification, continue to pose a threat to peace, stability and the very survival of mankind. That is why the virtual paralysis of the nuclear disarmament process is a cause of great concern for the international community.

My country has vehemently opposed and continues to oppose nuclear testing in all its forms. The tests carried out this year highlight once again the urgent need to eliminate nuclear weapons, as well as the real and immediate danger that they represent. The international community must continue to work to reach agreements on a phased programme, within a specific time-frame, for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the prohibition of their development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use and threat of use.

We are pleased that agreement has been reached in the Conference on Disarmament on the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee for the negotiation of a convention on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. We are convinced that negotiations on this issue must address both the elimination of existing fissile material and the prohibition of future production. We are confident that the agreement on the committee's establishment will facilitate progress towards the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

We note with great interest, and support, the Declaration adopted by a group of countries on 9 June 1998, "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda". This Declaration, together with other initiatives proposed by the Non-Aligned Movement, constitutes an important contribution towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

We wish to reaffirm the priority and importance that we attach to nuclear-weapon States' giving all non-nuclear-weapon States negative security assurances that are universal, unconditional and binding. We are confident that the establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee for this purpose in the Conference on Disarmament will result in progress on this matter.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) continues to be a key element for non-proliferation and disarmament. To this end, nuclear-weapon States parties to the Treaty must fully comply in good faith with their commitments, particularly those contained in article VI. The Preparatory Committee and the 2000 Review Conference of the NPT must implement the obligations under the Treaty as well as the commitments contained in the document of principles and objectives and the resolution on the Middle East. We note with satisfaction Brazil's accession to the NPT.

In addition to the nuclear-weapon-free zones established by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, the Antarctic, Pelindaba and Bangkok, there are various other initiatives with the same goal, including is the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and Mongolia's initiative to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that country. Colombia also supports the proposal to free the southern hemisphere of nuclear weapons and the proposal to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, in conformity with the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

We welcome the growing number of ratifications of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC). My Government has been making progress in the ratification process, and we hope to complete it as soon as possible. We are convinced that, as with other international conventions on weapons of mass destruction, the Convention's credibility and effectiveness will largely depend on achieving universality.

We are also pleased to highlight the progress in the negotiations on the protocol to improve the implementation and effectiveness of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (BWC), and the decision of the fourth Review Conference urging the conclusion of negotiations within the Ad Hoc Group as soon as possible. My country co-sponsored the ministerial Declaration adopted in New York on 23 September 1998 expressing firm support for the work of the Ad Hoc Group so that it can fulfil all aspects of its mandate.

I take this opportunity to recall that last August the Congress of Colombia adopted the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects and the four related Protocols. It is now before the Constitutional Court, the last step of the ratification process.

It is a source of satisfaction to note that with the first 40 ratifications of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction the way has now been cleared for its entry into force on 1 March 1999, in conformity with the provisions of article 17. My Government has already submitted the Convention to Congress for ratification.

The illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons and their accumulation and proliferation constitute a serious threat to peoples and to regional and national security; contribute to aggravating tensions that lead to internal struggles; and have a negative impact on the economic development of the countries concerned. There is wide recognition of the links between criminal organizations operating all over the world and involved in the illicit arms trade, drug-trafficking, money-laundering and terrorism. In the western hemisphere last year a binding instrument was adopted, the Inter-American Convention Against the Production and Illicit Trafficking of Firearms, Munitions, Explosives and Other Related Materials.

The time has come for the international community to consider action-oriented recommendations to combat the destabilizing trafficking in small arms, as a starting point for the negotiation of a global convention. Such an international convention must commit States to adopt legislative measures for domestic control of firearms, munitions and explosives, as an essential prerequisite to avoid the criminal use of these weapons and their diversion through clandestine and illicit channels. Similarly, an agreement on this topic should contain the necessary mechanisms to ensure compliance.

As the illicit trafficking in arms takes place in an underground economy consisting of international criminal organizations with information and communication channels and finance and distribution networks, it is clear that the war against this scourge must be waged with a global perspective. Therefore, as my country stated in its response to the Secretary-General on this issue, we firmly support the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade as soon as possible.

My country also supports the initiative to add a protocol on measures to fight illicit arms-trafficking to the convention against transnational organized crime to be negotiated within the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

Lastly, my delegation wishes to reaffirm its support for the holding of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV). We are convinced that this is the appropriate forum to analyse the course of future action on disarmament issues, arms control and other matters related to international security. We are also convinced of the importance of multilateralism in the disarmament process and of the need to secure the full participation of all members of the international community in the preparation and celebration of SSOD IV.

Mr. Than (Myanmar): May I begin by extending the warmest congratulations of the delegation of Myanmar to you, Sir, on your unanimous election to the chair of the First Committee. Our tribute also goes to the other members of the Bureau.

When we look at the horizon of arms control and disarmament as we commence the work of the First Committee at the fifty-third session, the picture that comes into view is not very encouraging or cheerful; it is not a

bright one altogether. It is a mosaic. The overall picture is rather dark, sombre and dismal. Many regions and areas in the picture are pitch dark. Some are in dim and grim light. Only a few areas give out some gleaming lights.

Nuclear disarmament is at an impasse. Bilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations between the United States and the Russian Federation seem to have lost steam for the time being. START II still remains unratified by the Russian Federation. We all wish to see the speedy entry into force of the START II Treaty and its full implementation by the two major nuclear-weapon States. We also urge them to reinvigorate their bilateral negotiation process and to proceed with the START III negotiations as soon as possible.

It is not that we do not recognize the concrete measures taken by the nuclear-weapon States in the past. We do recall with appreciation the deep reductions made by the two major nuclear-weapon States in their nuclear arsenals to date, and the unilateral measures taken by some nuclear-weapon States. But one should not just glory in one's past achievements and remain complacent. One must move with the times and carry out the urgent, important tasks that lie ahead.

At the historic Review and Extension Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), held in New York in April and May 1995, the States parties, including the nuclear-weapon States, made solemn and momentous commitments to, among other things, the determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate aim of eliminating them, and to consider taking further steps to assure non-nuclear-weapon States parties against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, which could take the form of an internationally and legally binding instrument.

It is regrettable to note that some nuclear-weapon States are not living up to these commitments. These solemn commitments are not even frequently referred to or reaffirmed in their statements. When such references are made by these States occasionally, the statements are perfunctory and unenthusiastic.

The reluctance of some nuclear-weapon States to make advances on these two important issues is evident from their continued opposition to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament and to the negotiation of an internationally and legally binding instrument on security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States. The same lack of political will on the part of some nuclear-weapon States to move forward on these issues is conspicuous at the Preparatory Committee meetings for the 2000 NPT Review Conference. Strong opposition at these meetings by some nuclear-weapon States to the formulation of even a moderate draft rolling text on nuclear disarmament, security assurances and related issues at these meetings is most regrettable. The second Preparatory Committee session, which was supposed to start substantive preparatory work for the 2000 NPT Review Conference, was a dismal failure.

A series of underground nuclear-test explosions conducted in South Asia in May this year proved that the NPT regime is not fully effective in containing the nuclear genie. These nuclear tests have caused international concern. As a matter of policy, Myanmar opposes any nuclear-test explosions by any country in any environment. We favour the cessation of all nuclear-test explosions in all environments for all time. The recent nuclear-test explosions in South Asia are not simply an issue of nuclear tests. They have raised a much deeper issue. If the nuclear-weapon States continue to be reluctant to fulfil their obligation with regard to nuclear disarmament and maintain their uncompromising attitude, will the NPT be sustainable, and can it be really effective in curbing the further proliferation of nuclear weapons? It is inherent in human nature and in the dynamics of nuclear proliferation that if the nuclear-weapon States cling to the perpetual possession of nuclear weapons and continue to place a high value on nuclear deterrence, it will only sharpen the appetite of the threshold States to acquire nuclear weapons, overtly or covertly.

In this regard, we need to adopt a two-pronged approach. On the one hand, non-nuclear-weapon States must refrain from acquiring nuclear weapons. On the other hand, the nuclear-weapon States must fulfil their obligation to take more effective nuclear disarmament measures leading to the total elimination of these weapons. An international legal norm placing a total ban on nuclear weapons must be established and effectively enforced. Nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation are indivisible and must go hand in hand.

Because of that attitude and the reluctance of some nuclear-weapon States to make advances on nuclear disarmament, there exists a credibility gap between the nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States. The nuclear-weapon States must bridge this credibility gap by their actual deeds and concrete measures.

Item 1 on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament is "Cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament", yet the Conference on Disarmament has been denied its proper role of carrying out multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament. In the face of such an impasse on nuclear disarmament, we need to search for a new agenda that will give an impetus to international efforts for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Myanmar stands ready to work together with other like-minded countries to arrive at a viable new agenda for nuclear disarmament.

In our view, such a new agenda should include dealerting and deactivating nuclear weapons and the removal of nuclear warheads from these weapons in the arsenals of nuclear-weapon States; the conclusion, as a first step, of a universal and legally binding multilateral agreement, committing all States to the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons; the conclusion of an internationally and legally binding instrument of the joint undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States not to be the first to use nuclear weapons; the conclusion of an international convention on fissile materials; and the conclusion of an internationally and legally binding instrument on security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States.

Dealerting and deactivating nuclear weapons and removing the nuclear warheads from these weapons in the nuclear arsenals of the nuclear-weapon States is a crucial immediate step. This will reduce the risk of unauthorized use, war by miscalculation or accident and the risk of precipitate decision-making to use nuclear weapons. In times of crisis this will give a much needed precious time lag that could be effectively used for conflict resolution and for the avoidance of nuclear war.

Another very important immediate step is the conclusion of an internationally and legally binding instrument enshrining the joint undertaking by the nuclear-weapon States not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. Such an unambiguous agreement on no first use, reflected in military doctrines and force deployments, and strict adherence to it by the nuclear-weapon States, will in effect prevent the use of nuclear weapons and the outbreak of nuclear war. For, if the role of nuclear weapons is limited to deterring their use by others, the use of nuclear weapons itself will lapse. The reduction of reliance on nuclear weapons under such an agreement will constitute a significant measure of de-emphasizing the role of nuclear weapons and will contribute to the advancement of the cause of nuclear arms control and nuclear disarmament.

These important immediate steps, among other things, are embraced in Myanmar's traditional draft resolution on nuclear disarmament, which we, together with other sponsors, will put forward at the current session. The main thrust of the draft resolution will be once again the reiteration of our call for a phased programme of nuclear disarmament leading to the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified time frame. It is hoped that our draft resolution will receive the widest support of Member States this year.

The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 8 July 1996 on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons* is of great importance. It constitutes a significant contribution to the cause of nuclear arms control and nuclear disarmament as well as to the development of international law. My delegation believes that, in view of the importance of the question of no first use of nuclear weapons, it may be worth while to seek another advisory opinion of the Court, by a General Assembly resolution, on the legality of the first use of nuclear weapons. My delegation is working with other interested delegations on this question.

One area with some gleaming lights in the overall dreary picture is that of the fissile material cut-off treaty. We welcome the establishment in the Conference on Disarmament of the Ad Hoc Committee on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

The Conference on Disarmament — the sole multilateral negotiating forum dealing with disarmament — has lived up to its reputation until now and has delivered concrete results whenever we give it an adequate mandate and the necessary political support. Its role must be strengthened in order that it may be able to respond to the needs of our time for the negotiation of a series of multilateral agreements on a range of issues. Our preference is, of course, to have an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament established in the Conference on Disarmament at the beginning of its 1999 session. However, in the event that consensus can be reached at its next year's session only on the re-establishment of ad hoc committees on a fissile material cut-off treaty and negative security assurances but not on other agenda items, the same treatment should be given to nuclear disarmament as to the other remaining agenda items. The possibilities must be explored of reaching agreement on the establishment of appropriate mechanisms on nuclear disarmament and the other remaining agenda items, including the appointment of special coordinators.

We believe that it is necessary and appropriate for there to be a limited enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament at this juncture in order to reflect present-day realities and the representative character of the membership of the United Nations. In this connection, Myanmar fully supports the applications for Conference on Disarmament membership by Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand.

Turning to our region, my delegation would like to express its deep appreciation of the important and useful role played by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific in promoting a security dialogue among the Member States in the region on regional and global issues of arms control and disarmament. We applaud the Centre for successfully organizing regional disarmament conferences and seminars of high value and standard for the benefit of the Member States in the region. We fully support and strongly recommend the Centre's carrying on and expanding its activities in the fine tradition that it has established and maintained for more than a decade.

We have before us a very full and heavy agenda for arms control and disarmament. However, the question that we should not lose sight of and should give the highest priority to, is nuclear disarmament. We must therefore do our utmost to overcome the current impasse on this most crucial question.

The Chairman: I would like to remind the Committee that, in accordance with the Committee's decision, the list of speakers for the general debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items will be closed today at 6 p.m. I urge interested delegations to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.

United Nations

A/C.1/53/PV.4

General Assembly

Fifty-third session

Official Records

First Committee

4th Meeting

Tuesday, 13 October 1998, 10 a.m.

New York

Chairman: Mr. Mernier . . . . . (Belgium)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda items 63 to 79 *(continued)*

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I wish at the outset to thank delegations for being punctual and thus demonstrating their sense of responsibility.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): I should first like to express my satisfaction at seeing you, Sir, the representative of Belgium to the Conference on Disarmament, as Chairman of the First Committee. Your experience as a representative in the Conference on Disarmament will surely help delegations in this body of the General Assembly.

I also want to pay tribute to Mr. Mothusi Nkgowe of Botswana for the gentle and effective manner in which he directed the work of this Committee during the fifty-second session.

The year 1998 has been rich in events falling within the realm of the First Committee. My delegation welcomes in this connection the re-establishment of the Department for Disarmament Affairs and commends the Secretary-General on the appointment of Jayantha Dhanapala to lead it. Ambassador Dhanapala, with whom I had the privilege to work on many occasions, in particular in the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, is one of the most prominent personalities in the area of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The international community has witnessed significant progress in the area of conventional weapons, such as the fulfilment, on 16 September 1998, of the conditions for the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Brazil was among the 120 countries that signed the Ottawa Convention in December 1997. We are pleased that more and more countries are acceding to the Ottawa treaty, and it is our hope that those States that still find themselves unable to join the anti-personnel landmines Convention will do so in the near future. Countries of Latin America are already in the process of following up the Ottawa Convention. A significant step was taken by President Mahuad of Ecuador and President Fujimori of Peru in initiating the preparation of a plan for the demining of the Peruvian-Ecuadorian border.

Another important event is the multilateral action being pursued in the field of small arms. In our region the process of small-arms control was greatly enhanced with the adoption of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit . Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials, signed by the members of the Organization of American States (OAS) in November 1997. Reference should also be made to the initiatives undertaken by various African countries, led by Mali, South Africa and Mozambique, and the agreements in that field reached by subregional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) aimed at curbing the spread of light weapons in that continent.

98-86059 (E)

This record contains the original texts of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Within the United Nations, Brazil is represented in the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms convened by the Secretary-General and favours the organization of an international conference on the illicit trade of small arms. It is our understanding that such a meeting should be preceded by a transparent and open-ended preparatory process which would allow for the definition of the mandate, objective and scope of the conference.

Brazil regards increased transparency in the field of armaments as an important tool to enhance confidence among nations, and in this sense we encourage participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. My Government has been providing the United Nations, since the first year of operation of the Register, with data on imports, exports and purchases of arms from domestic sources, as well as the so-called background information. Despite some increase in the number of States participating in the Register as of today, it comprises only half of the membership of the United Nations. The OAS is taking a step forward in this area by commencing the discussion of a convention on the notification of acquisition of the conventional arms covered by the United Nations Register.

In the dreadful area of weapons of mass destruction, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), under the leadership of my compatriot, Director-General José Bustani, has made good progress in the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. The number of States members of OPCW increased from 87 to 117 in the current year. With OPCW's support, a seminar on the processes of presentation of declarations and inspections was organized last month in Rio de Janeiro. Brazil was able to share with fellow Latin American and Caribbean countries the experience acquired in the setting up of its National Authority, which oversees more than 8,000 industrial establishments. A total of 168 countries have signed the Chemical Weapons Convention, and it is our hope that it can soon reach universality.

Brazil attaches special importance to the strengthening of the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological and Toxin Weapons and in the setting up of a verification mechanism that would bring that treaty in line with second-generation international disarmament instruments. We will continue to take part actively in the Ad Hoc Group established in 1994 with the aim of developing a credible and effective protocol capable of tightening international security in this area.

Some progress has been noted in the Conference on Disarmament. The Ad Hoc Committee on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons was finally established. Brazil was pleased with the re-establishment of the Ad Hoc Committee to negotiate negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The designation of three Special Coordinators for the items on the prevention of an arms race in outer space, transparency in armaments and anti-personnel landmines was also positive. One gets the impression that a spirit of cooperation is returning to the Conference on Disarmament. To our regret, however, no progress was possible in nuclear disarmament.

The nuclear tests conducted in May and June in South Asia came as a reminder that the danger of nuclear Armageddon is always present. The temptation to resort to atomic weapons as a form of national self-affirmation is strong. Brazil condemns all nuclear tests and urges the nuclear-capable States to adhere to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Having renounced the nuclear option, Brazil persists in the effort to prohibit nuclear weapons. As an interim measure, we are also striving to limit the geographical scope of the nuclear menace through the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones. This year again, a group of like-minded countries will put forward a draft resolution on the nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere and adjacent areas. The draft resolution will aim at promoting cooperation among the four established nuclear-weapon-free zones — created by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba — and at encouraging other regions of the world to join efforts in the same direction. The Political Declaration of the Ushuaia Summit established the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) countries and the associated States of Chile and Bolivia as a zone of peace, free from weapons of mass destruction. Another step in that direction is the convening, in Buenos Aires this month, of the fifth meeting of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic. The 24 States members of the Zone continue to uphold their goal of keeping their area free from nuclear weapons.

Last July Brazil was honoured by the visit of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. President Cardoso invited him to the signing ceremony of the instruments by which Brazil acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and ratified the CTBT. In a symbolic act, the ratification instrument of the CTBT was handed to the Secretary-General. Brazil is one of the 44 countries listed in annex 2 of the CTBT, whose ratification is necessary for the Treaty to come into force. Only nine other countries in that group have ratified it.

On 18 September Foreign Minister Lampreia deposited the instrument of accession to the NPT in Washington, and the Brazilian Ambassadors to the Russian Government and to the Court of Saint James did the same in Moscow and London. By adhering to the NPT, Brazil is helping to reinforce the non-proliferation regime and is reaffirming its credentials for urging the nuclear-weapon States to renounce the development and possession of nuclear weapons.

In his message to Congress last year, President Cardoso pointed out that Brazil knows that "the NPT by itself does not represent a definitive solution to the problem of nuclear weapons". The Treaty was conceived in the 1960s, as a temporary solution to the problem of nuclear proliferation, which could have led to an increase in the number of nuclear-armed countries and to multiplication of the risks of nuclear confrontation. In the ceremony of deposit of the instrument of accession, Minister Lampreia stated:

> "Brazil therefore strongly rejects the notion that nuclear weapons can bring security to any nation. On the contrary, they breed only tension and instability and constitute a major roadblock to international peace and security. Our decision to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons flows precisely from our determination to pursue an even greater role in the area of international peace and security. As a member of the NPT, we will work more actively and critically to ensure that peaceful nuclear activities in non-nuclear weapon States and international cooperation in this field are not restricted and to help to eliminate the threat of nuclear weapons".

When the National Congress of Brazil approved accession to the NPT it also mandated the Administration to pursue the objective of nuclear disarmament; that is enshrined in the very legislative decree that approved the Treaty. Brazilian representatives are thus instructed to participate in the activities relating to NPT membership, in particular the year 2000 Review Conference and its preparatory work.

The joint declaration (A/53/138, annex) of 9 June 1998, subscribed to by the Foreign Ministers of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden, launched the quest for a new agenda in the area of nuclear disarmament. It points towards a nuclear-free world and reaffirms the belief that just limiting the spread of nuclear weapons is not enough. The NPT will not have fulfilled its goal, as set out in article VI, until all existing nuclear weapons are gone.

A clear advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice denied legitimacy to atomic weaponry and stated that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control. We understand from that advisory opinion that unlimited procrastination in starting the discussion on the elimination of nuclear weapons will not be possible.

Brazil defends the primacy of international law, and those principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations which speak for the sovereign equality of States and against the use of force or the threat thereof against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State. All weapons of mass destruction must be banned. The international community should strive to reach the end of this century with the adoption of a time-bound agreement that will ensure the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

In emphasizing today the areas of non-proliferation and disarmament we do not mean to reduce the importance of the First Committee in the discussion of issues pertaining to international peace and security and related aspects. At some time in our future meetings we will have to turn to the root causes of the conflicts erupting at the end of the twentieth century. Race discrimination and poverty are certainly among such causes. References were made to them, both in the Security Council and in the General Assembly, in the recent discussion of the Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of sustainable development in Africa. As stated by my delegation in that discussion, we must devise ways to involve the Economic and Social Council and other agencies of the United Nations system in our struggle against those causes of conflict. Let us prepare to renew our fight against ethnic-based hatred and to seriously promote the eradication of poverty as we prepare for the new millennium.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*interpretation from French*): I am very pleased to congratulate you warmly, Sir, on your well-deserved election as Chairman of the First Committee. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau as well as your predecessor, our colleague from Botswana, on the remarkable work accomplished during the previous session.

I should also like to congratulate Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala on the results achieved since his nomination at the head of the Department for Disarmament Affairs, and to assure him of the full support and cooperation of my delegation.

The work of the present session is beginning under special circumstances. Just a short time ago we were welcoming the climate of détente generated by the end of the cold war, which allowed us to make important advances, particularly with regard to the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995 and the signature by a large number of countries of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), as well as the conclusion of the Convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines, which has already entered into force. However, recent developments in South Asia have reminded us that in matters of disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, much remains to be done if we are to attain the objective of general and complete disarmament set by the international community at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament.

Furthermore, these developments serve to strengthen our understanding that the non-proliferation regime still has serious shortcomings which must be corrected if we want to ensure that situations similar to those that have taken place in South Asia do not jeopardize the fragile edifice of non-proliferation. In this respect, I should like to share a few thoughts with the Committee.

First, the argument that nuclear disarmament lies within the domain of bilateral negotiation, with multilateral negotiation being of less importance, has been shown to be limited. Recent events have confirmed that the only framework that can deal with the problems of nuclear disarmament and thereby provide all the guarantees of transparency, universality and credibility, while responding to the expectations of the international community as a whole, is that which is offered by multilateral negotiation.

Secondly, this is even more true at a time when globalization is expanding to cover all human activities and when the international community is confronted with global challenges on several fronts, above all that of security, which more than ever can only be collective security. Thus, if we want to keep in step with world developments, we cannot continue to think in terms of the centre enjoying peace and security while the periphery is condemned to instability and insecurity.

Moreover — and this is my third thought — every effort should be made to remove the causes of competition between nuclear Powers and threshold States and to ensure that policies based on a balance of terror are obsolete. For example, there must be an end to laboratory simulations, and we must commit ourselves, as the International Court of Justice urges us in its advisory opinion of 8 July 1996, to "pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". (*A/51/4, para. 182*)

For us — and here I come to my fourth thought — non-proliferation makes sense and can be promoted only if the promotion of nuclear disarmament is guaranteed at the same time. Given that these two regimes are inextricably linked, it is important that the nuclear Powers adopt measures to prove their determination to respect their commitments.

My fifth thought concerns the degree of priority given to nuclear disarmament. We are convinced that it must remain, as the Group of 28 constantly repeats in Geneva, and as the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Durban stressed recently, the absolute priority and that it should continue to receive the sustained attention of our Organization, especially of those bodies responsible for disarmament, in order to induce the countries concerned to take all the necessary concrete measures, within an agreed time frame, to dismantle all nuclear weapons.

My final thought relates to the Conference on Disarmament. As the appropriate body for the negotiation of normative texts in disarmament matters, it continues to be, in our view, the only one able to give disarmament agreements a universal character and thus to guarantee the conditions for their respect.

It was therefore logical that for all these reasons, being convinced of the need to rid the Earth once and for all of all apocalyptic weapons and to give a new impetus to this important body, Algeria proposed on 30 July the creation of an ad hoc committee on such weapons and an ad hoc committee on banning the production of fissile material for the production of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.

This initiative contributed to further reflection on the matter and, together with other proposals, led to the creation by the Conference on Disarmament of an ad hoc committee on fissile materials. The decision, although modest in view of the task, makes possible negotiations

aimed at banning the production of fissile materials for military use and should facilitate the initiation of discussions on other aspects linked to nuclear disarmament.

One such aspect relates to the question of negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. My country, which welcomes the creation this year of a negotiation mechanism on this issue, feels that recent international developments should lead us to look seriously into this question. It should be dealt with in a global manner — that is, through an international convention drawn up by the Conference on Disarmament, which would contain strict, unconditional guarantees.

To consolidate this non-proliferation regime, the international community must encourage the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. Algeria, the third African State to ratify, on 11 February last, the African nuclear-weapon-free zone Treaty, commonly called the "Pelindaba Treaty", is still profoundly concerned, because the Middle East is so near to Africa, and because of the close links between them, about the lack of progress on establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We are all the more concerned since all the Arab countries are parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, while Israel continues to refuse to accede to it and, an even more serious matter, refuses to submit its nuclear installations to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards.

However, it is comforting to observe some positive signs in the area of nuclear disarmament, such as the expansion of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which now cover more than 100 countries, linked by commitments in the context of these zones; the decision of India and Pakistan to observe and respect a moratorium on nuclear testing; and, finally, their intention to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). In this context, my country welcomes the fact that Brazil has joined the NPT and the CTBT.

The question of convening a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which once again is on our agenda, has been the subject of careful study for several years, with no tangible results in spite of last year's adoption by consensus of a resolution on this question submitted by the Non-Aligned Movement. It is our hope that, transcending narrow national interests, we will be able to decide upon convening the session as soon as possible so that the international community is finally able to make an objective evaluation of what has already been accomplished and what remains to be done to achieve a more secure world for future generations.

In this regard, I wish to recall the appeal made at the Durban summit in September 1998 by the Non-Aligned Movement for the holding of an international conference, preferably in 1999, to try to reach agreement before the end of the century on a step-by-step programme for the total elimination of nuclear weapons in a given time-frame; on the banning of their production, acquisition, development, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of their use; and, finally, on their destruction.

The dynamism of disarmament only makes sense if it encompasses what is for a growing number of States the particularly important and delicate question of the proliferation and illicit transfer of conventional weapons, which is exacerbating new, violent trans-border phenomena such as terrorism and drug-trafficking. While significant efforts have been made in conventional disarmament, efforts which my country welcomes, they have only been brought to bear on importing countries.

Through this exercise, we feel that we need to study the illicit arms trade, whose effects are felt in many regions of the world. Thus, we need not so much to worry about the application of moratoriums and codes of conduct established by the producing countries, as to commit ourselves together to considering the ways and means to stop and dismantle all the hidden and uncontrolled networks that are providing criminals, traffickers and terrorists with their weapons of death and destruction.

It is important in this context to emphasize that States, which are duty-bound to guarantee the protection and security of citizens, should not be placed on an equal footing with criminal groups whose objective is to destabilize States, undermine the values of democracy and terrorize civilian populations.

Algeria, which devotes only a small fraction of its gross domestic product to arms purchases, recognizes that the question of conventional weapons proliferation should receive as much of the international community's attention as that of other types of weapons. We wish, on this occasion, to reiterate our readiness to consider any initiative or constructive action to that end. We therefore note our interest in the Secretary-General's proposal that arms and munitions expenses be lowered to 1.5 per cent of gross domestic product. We also welcome his proposal that data be compiled, researched and published on the arms trade, which fuels most crime and terrorism. This task, we feel, should be undertaken by the Department for Disarmament Affairs.

In the context of conventional disarmament, the imminent entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, following the fortieth State ratification, should not make us forget that greater efforts remain to be made, without undermining what has already been accomplished, by the Conference on Disarmament, which we feel must strive without further delay to prepare a negotiated instrument to which most of the mine-producing countries would accede.

The ad hoc committee on anti-personnel landmines, whose negotiating mandate is almost ready for approval, should be allowed to consider the question of mines which continue to strike at the populations of many countries, including my own. In this respect, it is important to emphasize the unshirkable responsibility of the colonial Powers for the damage caused by anti-personnel landmines. They have the duty to participate in demining the danger zones by providing all the information necessary.

The First Committee's work this year falls at a time when the questions generated by globalization are shaking our confidence and confusing our outlook. If there is one certainty, however, that cannot be shaken by present and future upheavals, it is the need to move towards general and complete disarmament, which alone can guarantee security to all, and to establish greater stability for all peoples of the world. May the work of the First Committee contribute to those goals.

Mr. Effendi (Indonesia): Let me begin by conveying my delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, on your unanimous election as Chairman of the First Committee. Our felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau. I wish also to express our gratitude to the representative of Botswana for the excellent guidance he provided at our previous session.

One of the great contradictions of our times is that, at the end of this century — a time span which has been most dramatic in history and has enriched human life with extraordinary achievements in the evolution of human values as well as in science and technology — we have witnessed the massive application of science and technology to vastly increase humankind's capacity to inflict death and destruction on an unprecedented scale, rather than harnessing it to effectively address the age-old problem of poverty. Consequently, we have failed to end the situation of living in the midst of a chilling and unprecedented phenomenon: At the peak of the world power structure, there exist enough nuclear weapons to destroy all life on Earth. At the mid-level of the world power constellation, there exist vast quantities of conventional armaments which, in scores of conflicts, have exacted an enormous toll in human lives and material devastation.

Paradoxically, at another level, in a vast portion of the world where the population lives in dire poverty, there exists a deprivation inexplicable in terms either of available resources or of money and ingenuity spent on armaments. Although we have many ideas, plans and action programmes to meet the basic needs of the mass of humanity, somehow such humane considerations have taken second place to the spending on wars and conflicts.

It is true that the end of the cold war somewhat reduced the dangers posed by nuclear weapons and the threat of nuclear war. We can draw on the many positive developments that have taken place in this crucial area. Hopefully, in the future, the declared willingness to initiate START III will lead to further significant reductions of nuclear weapons. It is also satisfying to note that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world, covering a vast land mass and its peoples, has become an irreversible trend towards a nuclear-free world. Moreover, there are also hopeful signs of the coming into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) next year, after its required ratification by the signatories.

Nevertheless, the ultimate guarantee for preventing nuclear holocaust is the elimination of nuclear weapons. Thus, these positive developments should not be perceived as diminishing the need for nuclear disarmament. There are worrying signs that nuclear weapons have made a comeback. After steady progress since the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles, the reduction and elimination of nuclear armaments have, in recent times, come to a halt. Rather than make further deep reductions, some are solidifying their stockpiles and consolidating their weapons infrastructure. Modern designs are being maintained and even upgraded into more sophisticated weaponry and the focus continues to be on new rationalizations for the continued possession of nuclear weapons, rather than for abolishing them. Meanwhile, new nuclear-weapon tests have been conducted.

Denial and discrimination are also evident in the discussions concerning the question of a ban on fissile materials. It is paradoxical to note that, while expressing

willingness to end production of these materials, some are at the same time opposed to giving up existing stocks. There is no point in continuing to produce material that is already available in huge quantities or if the ban applies only to future production and no limits are set on the use of previously produced materials. Such an approach would preserve the status quo and would not contribute to the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime or to disarmament.

It is evident now that, three years after the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and after the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of States Parties to the Treaty, the Treaty has not led us to a more credible non-proliferation regime. Indeed, the failure to undertake any significant or objective discussion on nuclear disarmament since the indefinite extension of the NPT makes it clear that the indefinite extension was a goal in itself and not a means to implement what was agreed upon. The confidence of non-nuclear-weapon States in the strengthened commitment of the nuclear-weapon States to the full implementation of the Treaty has been severely eroded. The rejection of the proposal for a step-by-step approach for the elimination of nuclear arsenals under multilateral auspices is contrary to the commitments undertaken in the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted at the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. The Review Conference of the year 2000 will therefore be an event of major importance for the international community and should not be reduced to "business as usual".

It is now 10 years since the third special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament was convened, and more than five years have elapsed since the last nuclear arms reduction treaty came into force. Still the Conference on Disarmament has been stymied for lack of progress on nuclear and related issues. Meanwhile, a myriad of unresolved issues has continued to be of pre-eminent concern, calling for a reassessment of our disarmament agenda as well as the formulation of new strategies and approaches. There is also an imperative need to continue to build on the agreements already reached and for concerted efforts towards unresolved issues, which should be addressed at the fourth special session on disarmament (SSOD IV), as they represent a continuing threat to international peace and security.

For Indonesia and other non-aligned countries, the question of convening SSOD IV is of exceptional importance. The position taken by the Non-Aligned Movement offers a broad and viable framework for arriving at a common understanding on how to proceed with the task of its convening. While taking into account the disparate attempts made by the international community to limit armaments in the post-cold-war era, SSOD IV will streamline those endeavours, provide the opportunity to appraise the current global situation and assess the vital issues of implementation or non-implementation of decisions, resolutions and treaties. Such an assessment will be useful and instructive, as valuable conclusions can be drawn from the achievements and failures of the past 10 years, and it will be an opportunity to acknowledge the negative aspects and setbacks and thereby give new impetus to our continuing efforts. In these efforts, the reports of the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament as well as the status of negotiations in bilateral and multilateral forums will provide significant input.

Indonesia would endorse an agenda that includes basic principles and general guidelines for the elimination of nuclear armaments while recognizing the importance of limiting conventional armaments. We also expect that SSOD IV will pronounce itself unambiguously on the need to enhance and strengthen the role of the United Nations in disarmament and on practical measures to increase the effectiveness of existing machinery. The reports of the Disarmament Commission submitted during the past two years contain a list of agenda items for SSOD IV which warrant our serious consideration. These and other proposals taken together, and given the necessary political will, would offer heightened prospects for the emergence of a consensus on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV and the drafting of a forward-looking plan of action that may lead to its convening in the foreseeable future. We could thus further the cause of arms limitation and disarmament.

In conclusion, in the post-cold-war era new approaches must replace the old and outdated doctrines. Priorities should continue to be given to new and more stabilizing reductions, with the aims of eliminating nuclear weapons, arresting the acquisition of advanced weapons of mass destruction, maintaining the credibility of the non-proliferation regime, achieving a ban on fissile materials and concluding an international convention against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear States. In these endeavours, we have ample guidance: the proposal of the non-aligned countries for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons, submitted in 1996 (A/C.1/51/12, annex); the report of the Canberra Commission of 1996; and the joint declaration (A/53/138,

annex) of last June by the Foreign Ministers of eight nations entitled "Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: the need for a new agenda". They contain realistic and achievable proposals to ensure that the international community need not endure the frightening prospect of the indefinite possession of these weapons. Equally important, they call for multilaterally negotiated instruments to make nuclear weapons reductions irreversible and move towards their internationally verifiable abolition.

Mr. Hayashi (Japan): At the outset, on behalf of the Japanese delegation, I would like to extend to you, Mr. Chairman, my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee during its fifty-third session. Your diplomatic experience and skill, as well as your knowledge of disarmament issues, qualities that were amply demonstrated at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, will greatly help us conduct fruitful discussions in this Committee. The tasks before us have particular significance this year, and I wish to assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation as you lead the work of this Committee to a successful conclusion.

Since the end of the cold war the international community has been facing the difficult task of establishing a new world order for international peace and security. Although we have not been entirely successful, it should also be noted that our earnest and strenuous efforts have borne some fruit, such as the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Ottawa Convention on anti-personnel landmines. While it is true that treaty negotiations and their conclusion are important, it is equally important that they gain universal adherence and are effectively and fully implemented. We should not be complacent and settle for anything less.

It is also noteworthy that the Conference on Disarmament re-established the Ad Hoc Committee on Effective International Arrangements to Assure Non-Nuclear Weapon States against the Use or Threat of Use of Nuclear Weapons and set up the Ad Hoc Committee on a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. It also nominated six Special Coordinators this year, and the substantive and constructive discussions were conducted by each Special Coordinator.

While there have been genuine achievements in the disarmament field, India and Pakistan shocked the world by conducting nuclear tests that run directly counter to international endeavours for disarmament and non-proliferation.

In his recent statement to the General Assembly, Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi described these events as an enormous challenge to the non-proliferation regime. In stressing the crucial importance of strengthening that regime, he noted that the following five objectives demanded urgent attention: first, universal adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); secondly, strict export controls on equipment, material and technologies relating to nuclear weapons and missiles, in order to ensure non-proliferation; thirdly, the prevention of further nuclear testing through universal support for the CTBT; fourthly, further progress in nuclear disarmament by the nuclear-weapon States; and, fifthly, early conclusion of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Japan considers the recent nuclear testing extremely serious, because it has posed a challenge to the NPT and would undermine its very foundation. We consider the NPT to be the basic framework for global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. Against this background, the recent nuclear testing by India and Pakistan, neither of which is a party to the Treaty, is a bold challenge to the international community. The States parties to the NPT are committed to the elimination of nuclear weapons through, on the one hand, a renunciation by the non-nuclear-weapon States of any intention to develop nuclear weapons and, on the other hand, the reduction and eventual elimination by nuclear-weapon-States of their nuclear weapons. In other words, the NPT is not a framework under which the nuclear-weapon-States are permitted to perpetually possess such weapons, whose possession is prohibited to other countries. As many as 187 countries subscribe to this idea, with the result that the NPT has gained the largest number of States parties of any treaty in the world.

Having said that, Japan does not in any way support the view that we must accept the testing as a fait accompli and act accordingly. Rather, it attaches great importance to Security Council resolution 1172 (1998), which was adopted following the tests. The Government of Japan also welcomes the strong and definitive message that the international community sent through the communiqués of the five Powers and the Group of Eight.

Now let me explain the initiatives my Government has taken to strengthen non-proliferation and promote nuclear disarmament.

First, immediately following the nuclear testing, Japan's then Foreign Minister Obuchi, now Prime Minister, proposed that an international forum be established on an urgent basis to consider possible measures to bring India and Pakistan to renounce their nuclear weapons programmes and to study appropriate ways and means of strengthening the global non-proliferation regime and promoting nuclear disarmament. Subsequently the forum was named the Tokyo Forum on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, and the first session was held in August, with the participation of a number of prominent experts, both governmental and academic, from around the world. The Forum is expected to submit a report containing concrete and constructive recommendations which will serve as guidelines for future nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament efforts.

Secondly, the Japanese Government will introduce a resolution on nuclear disarmament at this session of the First Committee. The Japanese Government submitted for the first time in 1994 a draft resolution on the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons, to demonstrate a clear commitment on the part of the majority of Member States to the elimination of nuclear weapons, and to prepare favourable ground for the NPT Review and Extension Conference the following year. The "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament", adopted at that Conference in 1995, reflected this idea and referred explicitly to the ultimate goal of "the ultimate ... elimination of nuclear weapons" *(NPT/CONF.1995/32 (Part I), Decision 2, fourth preambular paragraph)* as a common goal of the international community. Since then the successive resolutions introduced each year have been adopted with the support of the overwhelming majority of Member States, including, last year, all the nuclear- weapon States. Based on these achievements, the Government of Japan intends to put forward a new draft resolution this year, with a view to gaining a global commitment to the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

Although that goal is widely shared, there is a divergence of opinion on the ways and means of achieving it. The Japanese Government has been advocating a step-by-step approach of taking concrete and realistic measures for achieving nuclear disarmament. From this point of view, the next step following the CTBT should be a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices, as envisaged in the 1995 "Principles and Objectives".

Japan welcomes the Conference on Disarmament's decision to establish an ad hoc Committee on this issue. Although the Ad Hoc Committee could not commence negotiations this year, the Conference on Disarmament should re-establish it early in the next year's session so that the substantive negotiations can begin as soon as possible.

While the scope and structure of the fissile material treaty are still to be negotiated, Japan is confident that the ban on the production of fissile material will serve as a significant measure for both nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

Among the various issues which should be addressed during the negotiations on a fissile material production ban treaty, the question of how to deal with stockpiles will be one of the most contentious. Japan believes the problem of fissile material stockpiles is too important to set aside, and will require intensive deliberations on the most appropriate way of dealing with it.

In addition to the question of stockpiles, there may be some technical issues that have yet to be solved. In this connection, the Japanese Government organized a seminar on the "Technical Aspects of the Cut-Off Treaty" that was held last May in Geneva. We would welcome initiatives by other countries for the same purpose. The Government of Japan, having a wide range of knowledge and experience in the field of peaceful uses of nuclear energy, will continue to contribute constructively to negotiations on this issue.

A fissile material treaty is undoubtedly the next multilateral step, but it is certainly not the final one. Considering that it has taken several decades for the idea of a ban on the production of fissile material to develop to the point at which actual negotiations have begun, we believe it is not at all premature to start deliberations on a possible step or steps to follow the fissile material cut-off treaty. In this light, it should be noted that the Conference on Disarmament conducted serious discussions on how to deal with issues related to nuclear disarmament, through presidential consultations. The Government of Japan highly appreciates the efforts made by the successive Presidents of the Conference on Disarmament in this regard, and hopes that these consultations will soon produce an appropriate and effective mechanism for the discussion of additional multilateral measures to promote nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear disarmament is a responsibility that must be shared by the international community as a whole. On the other hand, it is undeniable that the nuclear-weapon States must assume the major responsibility. In this context,

nuclear reduction measures by the two largest nuclear-weapon States, the United States and the Russian Federation, are the most important. Japan appreciates the achievements of those two States to date and calls for the entry into force of START II and the commencement of negotiations on START III as early as possible.

It is noted that a number of nuclear disarmament measures have recently been carried out by some nuclear-weapon States. The strategic defence review initiative by the United Kingdom is one such example. Any unilateral action by the nuclear-weapon States for the reduction of their nuclear arsenals is welcome and creates an environment conducive to further nuclear disarmament measures by others.

Another measure worth mentioning is the agreement reached between the United States and the Russian Federation on the management and disposal of excessive supplies of plutonium. This decision is surely going in the right direction.

Nevertheless, progress on nuclear disarmament in the past few years has been slow and has fallen short of the expectations of the international community. It is earnestly hoped that nuclear disarmament efforts will be accelerated and intensified.

As nuclear disarmament is an issue affecting the entire world, non-nuclear-weapon States have the legitimate right to be informed of progress and efforts being made in this area. Japan welcomes the efforts made by the nuclear-weapon States to that end at the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference, and continues to emphasize the importance of such efforts.

Let me now turn to the NPT review process. It is our long-standing and firm belief that the NPT has been and will continue to be the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament. Both universality and full implementation of the Treaty are essential in order to consolidate the NPT regime. A significant step towards universality was made with the accession of Brazil, increasing the number of States parties to 187.

As for ensuring full implementation, it is appropriate to make use of the strengthened NPT review process, which was agreed as part of the decision on the indefinite extension of the Treaty. It was disappointing that the Preparatory Committee at its second session was not able to adopt a report on the substantive issues. The status of implementation at present falls far short of the expectations expressed in 1995.

The Review Conference in the year 2000 is of vital importance, because it will provide the first opportunity to assess the implementation of the Treaty since the decision on its indefinite extension was taken. In order to attain the goal of the NPT, we should have a sense of history as well as a vision for the future. As the next Review Conference will take place when the new millennium is about to unfold, I would like to propose that it would be particularly opportune for the year 2000 Conference to herald a clear vision of our aspirations for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament in the twenty-first century.

Let me briefly touch upon the CTBT. I take note of the statements recently made by the Prime Minister of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of India to the General Assembly on this issue. We consider those statements to be a positive step forward, although they contain some ambiguities. Hoping that their words will be reflected in concrete action, the Government of Japan strongly calls upon India, Pakistan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to sign and ratify the CTBT, and upon other States which have not yet done so to ratify it, so that it can enter into force as soon as possible.

In the regrettable event that the Treaty cannot be brought into force in the three years after its opening for signature, a conference will need to be convened in 1999 to promote the earliest possible achievement of that goal.

I would next like to turn my attention to conventional weapons. In a number of regional conflicts it is conventional arms that are actually being used, maiming and killing thousands of people each year. Japan believes that a ban on anti-personnel landmines is a matter of priority for the international community, and wholeheartedly welcomes the entry into force of both the Ottawa Convention and the amended Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). Japan has already concluded the Protocol, and we deposited the instrument of acceptance of the Ottawa Convention on 30 September this year. The Government of Japan calls upon all countries which have not yet done so to conclude these two international instruments on anti-personnel landmines as soon as possible.

The complete ban on anti-personnel landmines in accordance with the Ottawa Convention must be our goal. It is also true, however, that no small number of countries find it difficult at present to accept a complete ban. Against

this background, the Government of Japan is of the view that the conclusion of a treaty which prohibits the transfer of anti-personnel landmines will be a realistic and significant measure, and thus supports the draft mandate by the Special Coordinator on anti-personnel landmines in the Conference on Disarmament for an ad hoc committee to negotiate such a treaty. The Government of Japan hopes that a consensus will be reached on this draft mandate next year and looks forward to the early commencement of negotiations.

The international community is becoming increasingly aware of the tragic loss of life caused by small arms and light weapons in numerous domestic and regional conflicts around the world. Having recognized the magnitude of this problem years ago, the Government of Japan proposed setting up the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, and is gratified by the growing interest in addressing this issue. From 7 to 9 September this year the Government of Japan hosted the Tokyo Workshop on Small Arms, to which it invited the members of the follow-up group of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms with a view to assisting them in their important work. Japan also welcomes the proposal by Switzerland to host in the year 2000 an international conference on the illicit arms trade in all its aspects.

Although international rules on weapons of mass destruction have been agreed, there is no such legal framework for reducing or preventing excessive and destabilizing accumulations and transfers of small arms and light weapons. It is high time for the whole world to come together to tackle the problem of small arms and move toward establishing a possible international norm. The Government of Japan is of the view that it should include both reduction and prevention aspects based upon the 1997 report of the Small Arms Panel.

Increasing transparency in armaments in order to reduce tensions is another important task. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms has greatly contributed to confidence building among nations by enhancing transparency. While about 90 countries, including major exporting countries, participate in this system each year, about half the Member States of the United Nations continue to stand aside from this international effort. The Government of Japan calls upon all Members to participate in the system. At the same time, it believes that this system, including the categorization of armaments, can be reviewed and improved, for example, by introducing information on military holdings.

Allow me to touch upon another category of weapons of mass destruction: biological weapons. The Government of Japan welcomes the steady progress being made in the negotiations on the protocol of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). We also appreciate the added political impetus that these negotiations were given by the informal ministerial meeting held on 23 September in New York. Japan believes that the central pillar of the verification regime should be the "challenge investigation". It should also be stressed that the understanding of, and cooperation with, related national industries will be essential to ensuring smooth implementation of the BWC verification regime. Against this background, and as emphasized in the statement made by our representative in the ministerial meeting, Japan is willing to participate constructively in the negotiations with a view to concluding them at an early date.

While the international community strives to maintain and ensure peace and security, it is regrettable that action which is contrary to these international efforts was taken in Asia. The recent missile launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, whether or not it was an attempt to launch a satellite into orbit, not only caused serious concern for the security of North-East Asia, but also renewed our concern over the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles.

Before concluding my statement, I would like to express my appreciation for the role of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific. The Centre has been actively engaged in a number of programmes, known as the Kathmandu process, for disarmament and regional stability. It plans to organize a United Nations disarmament conference in Nagasaki next month to conduct discussions focused on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. I trust that these activities will be continued and further promoted.

I would like to reiterate the Government of Japan's firm belief that disarmament can only be achieved by taking steady and concrete measures. While we must bear in mind the noble aim of disarmament, it is no less important that we be realistic. This should be our guide as we tackle the issue of disarmament, keeping in sight where we are now, what our final goal is and what the next best step should be. It is my sincerest hope that constructive and fruitful discussions will be conducted along this line in the First Committee this year. For its part, the Government of Japan will make every effort to contribute to achieving our common goal.

The Chairman (interpretation from French): I call on the Observer of Switzerland.

Mr. Hofer (Switzerland) (*interpretation from French*): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to chair the First Committee and to assure you of Switzerland's wholehearted support. My delegation is particularly pleased at your assumption of your high office. Your role, like that of Belgium, of promoting a pragmatic approach to nuclear disarmament, and your commitment to a total ban on anti-personnel mines, guarantee fruitful results for this session.

The balance sheet of disarmament and arms control in the past 12 months reveals a contrasting situation. Progress has been made with the adoption of practical disarmament measures, particularly in matters of transparency and the verification of the elimination of certain arms categories, but that progress does not give cause for complacency. The First Committee must therefore evaluate these developments in depth in order to establish priorities for the coming year, bearing in mind, in particular, the spirit of the commitments on general and complete disarmament contained in article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Among the positive developments in disarmament negotiations, I would like to point out the efforts made by the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, which, after a period of stagnation, has rediscovered its essential calling, namely, the negotiation of multilateral treaties. This result was made possible by the adoption of a programme of work that underlined the importance of nuclear disarmament. The Conference also set up a special committee for the preparation of a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for military purposes. These two decisions constitute a political advance which Switzerland welcomes, even though no actual arms reduction has resulted from it to date. After the opening of the 1999 session, the Conference on Disarmament, if it wishes to attain its objectives, should pursue its negotiations with determination and take up the same operational declarations and decisions.

The expansion of the membership of the Conference remains a topical issue. At the last session the Conference was unfortunately unable to approve the intermediate solution proposed by the Special Coordinator. Switzerland, which welcomes efforts towards a qualified universality, still maintains that the Coordinator's plan represents considerable progress, and would like the presidency and the members of the Conference to pursue consultations before the end of this year so that the decision to welcome five new members can be made at the first meeting next year.

The Ad Hoc Group charged with the negotiations to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention has not proceeded at the pace expected by my Government. Switzerland plays an active part in the Group's work, in the interest of establishing an effective mechanism to monitor the universal ban on biological weapons. My Government expects significant progress to be made in this respect in the coming year. I would also like to take this opportunity to indicate that Switzerland would welcome it if the future institution to monitor the ban on biological weapons were based in Geneva, where this new body would benefit from numerous synergies and from a working environment tailored to its important missions.

Although the devastating risks of the weapons I have already spoken about demand a high degree of vigilance on the part of the international community, the greatest human tragedies are today associated with the use of conventional weapons. In this respect, I would like to raise the question of anti-personnel landmines. My Government is pleased that the Convention on the total prohibition of these mines, the Ottawa Convention, is scheduled to enter into force on 1 March 1999. It has also noted, with appreciation, Mozambique's willingness to host the first conference of the States parties in Maputo. Switzerland will support this conference by, among other things, facilitating the participation of delegations from developing countries.

The entry into force of the Ottawa Convention is only one milestone on the long path towards the total elimination of the scourge represented by anti-personnel mines. In fact, the full effectiveness of this Convention will depend on its implementation being coordinated on an international scale. The United Nations should play a key role in this process. It is in this spirit that the Swiss Government has decided to set up in Geneva an International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. The enlarged Council of the Centre, with representatives from more than 15 Governments, will meet for the first time on 20 November 1998. One of the cornerstones of this institution is the establishment of a computer network linking United Nations demining centres in order to provide specialized United Nations units all over the world with the information required to accelerate and perfect demining programmes. Moreover, the second conference of the directors of United Nations demining centres will be organized in Geneva next February, bringing together international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Outlawing anti-personnel mines and putting them out of service must not make us forget their destructive effects. There are today gaps in the planning of assistance for the victims. For this reason, the Swiss authorities have taken the initiative, in agreement with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in particular, of developing a concept for helping the victims of mines that could be integrated into the health policies of the countries concerned. It is a matter of adapting those policies in order to reduce the intolerable suffering of the victims in a wider public health context. These ideas are contained in a document entitled "Berne Manifesto — Assistance for Mine Victims". My Government appeals to interested countries and international organizations to join it in this project.

The proliferation of light weapons and small arms is also a source of concern to my authorities. This highly complex area does not lend itself to solutions comparable to those found in the Ottawa Convention. We must therefore look for new solutions with the same determination. In Switzerland's view, a coherent multidisciplinary concept should be developed in order to reduce and prevent the accumulation and transfer of light weapons, as well as their illegal use.

The Swiss Government supports several initiatives to this effect and, in particular, is striving to encourage the work done within the framework of the United Nations. Moreover, my country is associated with the process that started at the first intergovernmental meeting on small arms, held at Oslo in July this year, which was followed by a meeting in New York organized by Canada and Norway. My country is also following with interest the international conference now taking place in Belgium on the impact of small arms on sustainable development.

Switzerland is working on a project for a system of international transparency that would include several obligations, among them the obligation to mark small arms and to declare their production, transfer and storage, in order in particular to contribute towards the fight against illicit trafficking. Further to the process started in Oslo, my country therefore intends to organize a follow-up meeting next year devoted to the marking of small arms and to the system of transparency.

In view of the urgency and scope of the problems raised by small arms, Switzerland is of the opinion that it would be useful to coordinate the various initiatives in this area. Here the United Nations could play a central role. My Government would in fact be ready to host a conference in Geneva, as soon as possible, on all forms of illicit trade in small arms. Such a conference, which is among the recommendations of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms chaired by Ambassador Mitsurio Donowaki of Japan, could lead to the formulation of a general plan of action against such weapons.

The ammunition used in small arms is obviously linked to the problems I have just mentioned. In this regard, I would like to refer to the next review conference of parties to the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects. Last year, Switzerland organized a seminar on that conference. My country is making efforts in this field, and will invite the States parties to the Convention and the members of the Conference on Disarmament to a expert seminar to be held next year in Thun on questions of the methodology of ballistic testing.

With regard to nuclear disarmament, a reduction in arsenals is being envisaged through a decrease in the number of strategic warheads and a review of nuclear programmes, like that now under way in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, unfortunately, we still await the ratification of the START II Treaty by the Russian Federation. The Swiss Government reaffirms that it remains convinced of the necessity of making every conceivable effort towards the universal abolition of nuclear arms. In particular, Switzerland maintains that steps towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, such as those referred to in the statement issued at London on 9 June 1998 by the foreign ministers of eight countries, will open new prospects for disarmament.

The second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) did not yield any concrete results, and we deeply regret this. Switzerland, which would like the international fight against nuclear proliferation to be marked by a drive to increase its effectiveness, expects the next session of the Preparatory Committee to create a solid consensual basis for the Review Conference.

It is imperative that the States parties to the NPT send a clear and unequivocal political signal on the principles of the Treaty, particularly in response to the disturbing events that occurred in South Asia in May. The Swiss Government has expressed its profound regret at the nuclear tests carried out by India and by Pakistan, which it regards as unjustifiable. In a wider context, an end must be put to the

spiral of regional tensions and problems; these must be settled peacefully. Switzerland, which has taken note with relief of the resumption announced for this week of a structured dialogue between India and Pakistan, recalls that it is ready to support these contacts. We hail the efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and congratulate him on his support for this process.

The nuclear tests carried out by India and by Pakistan highlighted the essential non-proliferation role of the NPT and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). In this respect, Switzerland will be following with interest the commitments made by India and by Pakistan through their statements to the General Assembly this September, and urgently appeals to these two countries to join the CTBT.

I am eager in conclusion to reiterate Switzerland's firm support of the irreplaceable role of the United Nations in the sphere of international security. Its activities promote disarmament and arms control, and my country is ready to offer the Organization all the support it requires for this purpose.

Mr. Campbell (Australia): Let me first congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at this session. We are confident that under your expert guidance and direction the Committee is assured of productive and forward-looking outcomes. You will have our full support.

The past year has witnessed a number of developments which pose a challenge to our arms control agenda. Indeed there are some commentators who would have us believe that the nuclear tests conducted by India and by Pakistan in May of this year have fundamentally changed the parameters of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, pointing us away from cooperation, arms control and disarmament towards confrontation, arms races and the risk of nuclear war. To add weight to their argument, they cite the increase in ballistic missile development in South Asia and by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran, and the challenges to inspection and verification agreements posed by Iraq.

Unwelcome as these developments are, Australia, while not underestimating the difficulty of the task ahead of us, does not share such apocalyptic visions. For one thing, we in no way minimize the remarkable achievements of recent decades — lent added impetus by the end of the cold war — which have resulted in the conclusion of many bilateral, regional and international arms-control agreements. For another, while we acknowledge the tensions that exist between the proponents of non-proliferation and those of disarmament as to which should have primacy, we strongly believe that we have made, and can continue to make, remarkable progress on both fronts.

Our task surely must be to work with determination towards a situation where the right to self-defence of all nations, which is enshrined in the United Nations Charter, must be assured at the lowest possible level of conventional armament and without recourse to weapons of mass destruction. For, whatever the inequalities and inadequacies of the current regime, the alternative — a world in which each and every State could claim the right to arm itself with whatever weapons it deemed necessary for its national security — is one from which the international community has rightly recoiled for the past 50 or more years.

Any survey of the progress made to date in the field of arms control and disarmament will inevitably lead to two key conclusions. The first is self-evident: there is more work to be done, much more. The second is perhaps easier to overlook: in the face of periodic setbacks and challenges, it is vitally important and in the security interests of all countries that we stay the course on arms control and disarmament; that we not take for granted the value of what has been achieved to date; and that we maintain broad-based political commitment to the norms and institutions we have put in place or are preparing to build.

In the area of weapons of mass destruction, there is no doubt that the developments in South Asia these past months have posed a challenge to the non-proliferation regime and the instrument which is at its heart, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The year 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty will be a very significant event and one where the implications of the Indian and Pakistani tests will have to be addressed.

Australia does not subscribe to the assessments which led to those tests, least of all the spurious argument that they could be justified by the alleged lack of progress by the nuclear-weapon States in meeting their article VI commitments. Nor do we believe that the testing of nuclear devices was the right response to India and Pakistan's security concerns, real or perceived. Indeed, we consider that the national security outlook of both countries, their regional neighbours and the international community have suffered greatly as a result of those tests. It is now for the international community to examine where we go from here in order to establish the peace and stability required in

South Asia in such a way that those countries in the region do not feel they need a nuclear deterrent, as well as to repair the damage done to the international non-proliferation regime to which the quasi-totality of the General Assembly subscribes.

Since the tests in May there has been some progress in this direction. Australia welcomes the recent statements by India and Pakistan in the Assembly indicating that both countries are moving towards adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The statements by the two Prime Ministers vindicate once again the value of the CTBT as a benchmark of internationally acceptable behaviour in the area of nuclear testing, and Australia urges both countries to take the necessary steps to sign and ratify the CTBT as soon as possible and without any conditions. Ratification of the CTBT by India and Pakistan would be a critical step along the path towards bringing the CTBT into force, and we earnestly urge them to take it without delay.

But the rest of us — the 150-odd States that have so far signed the CTBT — do not need to await ratification by India and Pakistan and entry into force as we work to maintain the strength and momentum of the CTBT. Indispensable starting points are to encourage the widest possible signatures and ratifications and to build up the institutional fabric of the CTBT Organization. In particular, it is important to ensure the fulfilment of the Treaty specification that the verification regime be operational by entry into force, through continued strong support, both political and financial, for the development and operation of the International Monitoring System, the heart of the Treaty's verification regime.

Together with New Zealand and Mexico, Australia will be sponsoring a clear, simple draft resolution in which members of the Assembly will be invited to reaffirm their unequivocal commitment to the CTBT and the non-testing norm it embodies. We look forward to working with other delegations to ensure its adoption by consensus.

The very welcome resumption of bilateral dialogue by India and Pakistan and their agreement in the Conference on Disarmament to the commencement of fissile material cut off negotiations are also significant and welcome developments. We also have a firm expectation that both India and Pakistan will make further moves to demonstrate clear support for the international nuclear and non-proliferation and disarmament regime, particularly by adhering to the benchmarks laid down in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998) of 6 June 1998.

Consistent with that resolution and the interests of national, regional and global security, we would also hope that both countries will work towards renouncing the nuclear option and joining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The nuclear non-proliferation regime, the cornerstone of which is the NPT, is of fundamental importance to the security of Australia and its region. The sixth Review Conference of the NPT, which will take place in April and May 2000, will be one of the most important in the history of the Treaty. The third meeting of its Preparatory Committee in April next year will be a critical step towards building an outcome to the 2000 Review Conference which enables the non-proliferation regime successfully to address the most challenging period in its 30-year history. The challenges confronting the regime arise from the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests; Iraq's attempts to undermine the authority of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM); and recent actions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea which put the 1994 Agreed Framework between the United States and that country in jeopardy.

Australia's goal for the sixth Review Conference is to achieve an outcome which will enhance further the strength and effectiveness of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We believe that this general goal will be attained through the achievement of the following series of subsidiary objectives to be attained by the time of the 2000 Review Conference: first, in the wake of Brazil's welcome accession to the Treaty, further evidence of Treaty parties' resolve to consolidate and promote progress towards universal membership of the Treaty; secondly, further progress towards the realization of the disarmament commitments embodied in article VI of the Treaty, including through substantive progress in the negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for a fissile material cut-off treaty, significant further progress towards implementing the CTBT and bringing it into force and substantive progress in negotiations for a START III agreement following the expected ratification of START II by the Russian Federation; thirdly, entry into force of a significant number of additional protocols to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreements and significant progress towards the integration of classical and the strengthened safeguards systems as the international safeguards norm; fourthly, further progress in the establishment and strengthening of nuclear-weapon-free zones; fifthly, significant progress towards universal acceptance of the nuclear export control regimes as a necessary and legitimate mechanism for the effective implementation of Treaty obligations; sixthly, a strong

reaffirmation of the support of the Treaty parties for the IAEA and its role as the Agency responsible for verifying the fulfilment of parties' obligations under the Treaty and in facilitating the further development of the applications of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes; and, lastly, an agreement on an appropriate expression of NPT parties' views about, and commitment to, resolving nuclear proliferation concerns in the Middle East.

At the same time, we believe the Review Conference should adopt a new set of principles and objectives to guide nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament endeavours in the period leading up to the seventh NPT Review Conference in 2005. This would be consistent with the spirit of Decision 1 of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference that the new strengthened review process should be forward-looking.

The decision by the Conference on Disarmament in August this year to commence negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty represented the starting point towards realization of a long-held and high-priority goal of the Australian Government. We have made it clear on numerous occasions that we view such a treaty as the next important step in the multilateral nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agenda, following the conclusion of the CTBT. The start of substantive negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament early next year will send an important signal that the international community has faith in the resilience of the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime and that it is committed to the principles and objectives which emerged from the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. Completion of a fissile material cut-off treaty will also be a practical way forward towards our shared goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons — "an important and urgent reinforcing step in that endeavour", to quote the Canberra Commission.

The benefits which a fissile material cut-off treaty will bring to the international community are well known but nevertheless worth repeating. It will build on the CTBT by adding a quantitative dimension to the qualitative cessation of the nuclear arms race enshrined in that Treaty. It will bring all nuclear facilities capable of producing fissile material for use in nuclear weapons under legally binding international nuclear safeguards. By including the nuclear-weapon States, as defined by the NPT, and non-NPT States, the perceived imbalance of rights and obligations between the nuclear-weapon States and the non-nuclear-weapon States will be addressed.

The treaty will create a security climate which is conducive to the dismantling of nuclear arsenals and to the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons by creating greater transparency and confidence about the capabilities, as well as the intentions, of countries with fissile-material production facilities. And finally, a fissile material cut-off treaty will establish a central and indispensable element in any verification regime for a world free of nuclear weapons.

An imaginative, creative and flexible approach will be needed in the negotiations if we are to craft an instrument which, on the basis of the Shannon Report and mandate, is truly non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable.

At the outset of my comments on the negotiations to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), Australia would like to acknowledge the commitment and skill of the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group, Ambassador Tibor Toth, whose work throughout the year has been critical to progress so far. We have come some distance since the rolling text was adopted and the hard work of resolving key differences got under way. Having said that, Australia, along with many other delegations, has experienced a sense of frustration at the inevitably slow progress on this difficult negotiation. For that reason, in March 1998 Foreign Minister Downer proposed a number of ideas to enhance the political profile of the negotiation with a view to ensuring its successful conclusion at the earliest possible date.

After extensive consultations with delegations involved in the negotiations as to what steps might be most helpful, Australia went forward with the development of an informal ministerial meeting. Although the proposal began as an Australian initiative, it quickly developed a momentum of its own and became a truly cross-regional collaboration to support and advance the work of the Ad Hoc Group. The meeting, chaired by the Foreign Minister of New Zealand, The Right Honourable Don McKinnon, MP, was held here in New York on 23 September and issued a Declaration sponsored by 57 States parties to the BWC.

The Declaration recognizes the threat posed by biological weapons and the importance of strong and urgent action to ensure the strengthening of the ban against them. It expresses support for improving and strengthening the Convention through the negotiation of a protocol in the Ad Hoc Group, underlining the importance of fulfilling all aspects of the Ad Hoc Group's mandate. The Declaration

expresses support for the Biological Weapons Convention and for the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Group, including on securing necessary time for the Group to conclude its work. It calls on all States parties to redouble their efforts in the Group to complete the protocol on the basis of consensus at the earliest possible date. It also affirms continued high-level political support for the negotiations, including — after consultation with States parties to the Convention — through the convening of a high-level meeting at an appropriate time in 1999.

It is a matter of great satisfaction to us, as I am sure it is to others, that the common will recorded in the Declaration to securing necessary time for the Ad Hoc Group to conclude its work has already found practical expression in the decision of the Group at the conclusion of its final session for this year to allocate a significantly increased period of 16 weeks to the negotiations in 1999.

We must, however, work hard to ensure that this precious time is used productively and that the coming year provides decisive outcomes. One conclusion drawn by the Australian Foreign Minister at the time of the adoption of the Declaration at the informal ministerial meeting was that both the success of the meeting and the adoption of the Declaration were reflections of the degree of commonality in the views of the vast majority of delegations in the negotiation. That commonality far outweighs our differences.

In the view of Australia, those remaining differences will best be managed by looking forward to solutions, rather than backward to stale approaches. From an Australian perspective, we would re-emphasize our own interest in seeing the negotiation of strong verification machinery, including an appropriate system of visits to facilities coupled with a credible structure to meet the objectives relating to investigations. An important outcome of such measures would be to build international confidence in levels of compliance with the regime and transparency in its operations.

Australia is committed to continuing to work in a spirit of cross-regional cooperation and will devote every effort to the Ad Hoc Group negotiations in the year ahead, including through joining others in planning for a high-level meeting. Our expectation is that this time next year, we will be a great deal closer to conclusion of the protocol, thus taking an irreversible step towards eliminating the threat of biological weapons.

Australia accords high priority to the successful implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which entered into force on 29 April 1997. While there have been challenges, we welcome the important and positive steps taken by States parties and by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in implementing the treaty and consolidating the verifiable, legally binding norm it represents. Experience to date in implementing the Convention demonstrates the strength that that verification machinery adds to disarmament and arms control.

We are encouraged that the vast majority of States are meeting their Convention obligations and by the effectiveness of the OPCW routine inspection regime to date, including industry inspections. Australia has been happy to cooperate in three such inspections and is active in promoting support for, and ratification of, the Convention in our region.

Currently membership of the Convention stands at 117 nations, including the two largest declared chemical weapons possessors — the United States and the Russian Federation. This widespread support is evidence of the credibility of the Convention as a disarmament and non-proliferation instrument. It will be important, however, for the Convention to succeed in its goal of ridding the world of chemicals weapons, that those countries which have not ratified or acceded to the Convention do so. It will also be important for the continued integrity of the Convention and its verification regime that those States parties that have not submitted their declarations do so.

Australia, as a signatory to the Ottawa Convention, welcomes the recent attainment of 40 ratifications. Subject to the completion of our national legislative processes, Australia's aim is to be an original State party to the Ottawa Convention when it enters into force on 1 March 1999. Australia remains concerned, however, that a number of large producers and users of anti-personnel landmines remain outside the Ottawa treaty.

Accordingly, we believe it to be both important and possible to negotiate within the Conference on Disarmament a ban on the transfers of anti-personnel landmines — one which draws in the major traditional producers and traders of anti-personnel landmines and thereby complements the Ottawa Convention and contributes to its fundamental aim. As the Conference on Disarmament Special Coordinator on landmines in 1996 and 1997, I have been encouraged by the evolution of the approach of the key Conference on Disarmament States non-party to Ottawa in that time —

such that all these States, I believe, are now ready to agree to a negotiation to ban landmine transfers.

In our view, any work in the Conference on Disarmament on anti-personnel landmines consistent with the terms of the Ottawa Convention would contribute to reducing the human tragedy anti-personnel landmines cause, mitigate the enormous social, economic and political costs to the international community, and would be a thoroughly worthwhile and justified objective. It would bring Ottawa Convention non-signatories some way towards the norm established by that Convention rather than run the risk of there being permanently alienated from it.

Australia is also aware that a good proportion of the anti-personnel landmines currently in the ground, those being laid now and those which, notwithstanding existing legal instruments, will be laid in the future, are the results of the actions of non-State entities. It is important, therefore, that the international community attack both the supply and the demand sides of this conundrum — where it is not possible to persuade political groups to forsake the use of anti-personnel landmines, the international community, through the Conference on Disarmament, can take measures to diminish the international supply of these weapons.

This is what a transfer ban would do. While many of the traditional producer States have in place various kinds of unilateral moratoriums on the export of anti-personnel landmines, a legally binding transfer ban would serve to standardize the scope of these moratoriums, many of which apply only to certain types of anti-personnel landmines and are time-limited, and give them a secure and lasting basis in international law.

Effective arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation require constructive and enlightened leadership, the political courage to take a global approach in the knowledge that a more peaceful, stable and secure international environment is in the interests of all of us, the willingness to fund the institutions we fashion and in the negotiations that lie ahead of us the ability to work cooperatively towards the attainment of our common goals. With a determined effort, we can build the more peaceful world we seek.

Mr. Lee See-young (Republic of Korea): This being my first intervention in the debate, allow me to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee this year. I am confident that your prominent leadership, experience and wisdom will guide this Committee to a fruitful conclusion. I take this opportunity to assure you that my delegation will spare no effort to support you and to make a contribution to the work of the Committee.

Despite the end of the cold war almost a decade ago, the world situation remains fluid and volatile. Conflicts triggered by ethnic, religious or cultural hatred are sweeping over many parts of the world, claiming innocent lives and precious resources, while the race in military spending knows no bounds. Nothing therefore seems more urgent or important for the international community than to seriously address the daunting task of creating a safer security environment, which will enable us to turn more of our resources and energy to sustainable economic development.

For this reason, my delegation considers that the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) should be a forum not only for reviewing what has been achieved, but also for finding out what should be done in the disarmament arena. We regret that the Disarmament Commission this spring failed to reach a consensus on the objectives and agenda of the special session. In our view, a balance must be struck in its agenda between nuclear disarmament and disarmament of other weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. My delegation earnestly hopes that a broad consensus on the objectives and agenda of the special session will emerge next year, paving the way for convening the SSOD IV in the near future.

Among the current disarmament issues before us, let me touch upon nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament issues. A series of nuclear tests conducted in South Asia last May dealt a blow to our efforts to move towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. It is all the more regrettable that these tests took place in the wake of progress towards nuclear non-proliferation — namely, the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). My Government joins the international community in urging the parties concerned to implement fully the measures prescribed in Security Council resolution 1172 (1998) as early as possible. In particular, we call upon the international community to maintain constant vigilance in preventing the transfer of nuclear-weapons-related materials, equipment and technology to third States.

Despite the fact that this setback is temporary, our endeavours to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world can

afford no further delay, and these efforts should be strengthened and accelerated further. Along this line, I would like to share some ideas on how we could proceed with these urgent tasks.

First, the international community should make every effort to maintain and further strengthen the existing nuclear non-proliferation regime. The first steps towards this goal are to secure the universality of the NPT and to bring into force the CTBT at the earliest possible date. We welcome the decision by the Brazilian Government to accede to the NPT and urge India and Pakistan to follow suit. My delegation also hopes that the recent encouraging signals by India and Pakistan with regard to signing the CTBT will soon be translated into concrete actions. Likewise, North Korea should be urged by the international community to join this movement in order to avoid the embarrassment of being left the only remaining State not having signed the CTBT of the 44 States set forth in this Treaty. For our part, I am pleased to inform the Committee that my Government is now proceeding with domestic procedures to ratify the CTBT in the first half of next year.

Secondly, the next logical and practical step is to negotiate and conclude the fissile material cut-off treaty. My Government welcomes the establishment last August of an Ad Hoc Committee entrusted with negotiations on the treaty within the Conference on Disarmament. We hope that the Ad Hoc Committee can achieve early success by accelerating the negotiations on a non-discriminatory and effectively verifiable treaty. In this process, we deem it essential to ensure from the initial stage the full participation of all the countries with nuclear capabilities, including non-States parties to the NPT.

Thirdly, nuclear-weapon States are called upon to make further concrete efforts to reduce their nuclear weapons with a view to achieving the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons. We recognize and welcome the recent decision by the United Kingdom to reduce its nuclear arsenal. We also commend the recent progress made by the United States and Russia in nuclear disarmament. Unfortunately, however, these achievements fall short of the international community's expectation for more substantial progress in nuclear disarmament. The START process should regain impetus, as a major step by the nuclear-weapon States to discharge their obligations under article VI of the NPT.

Last but not least, the regional and subregional initiatives should also be encouraged in parallel. The expansion of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the consolidation of existing ones will contribute to the cause of nuclear non-proliferation. In this context, we look forward to the early implementation of the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which both Koreas signed in 1992.

Since the North Korean nuclear problem came to the fore in 1993, the international community has exerted strenuous efforts to bring North Korea into full compliance with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement. Unfortunately, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has so far failed to cooperate fully with the IAEA in implementing this agreement. It is imperative that, as a party to the NPT, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea implement the IAEA safeguards agreement fully and faithfully. The preservation and verification of all relevant information regarding North Korea's past nuclear activities is a sine qua non for the final resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. My delegation joins the international community in urging North Korea to respond to the call for full compliance with its treaty obligations, and to cooperate fully with the IAEA.

The Geneva Agreed Framework is an important agreement to address the North Korean nuclear problem. Hence, my Government has faithfully fulfilled its commitment to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) through playing the central role in the light water reactor project. We will continue to do so despite current economic difficulties, as long as North Korea lives up to the letter and spirit of the Agreed Framework. In particular, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is committed to maintaining the freeze of its nuclear facilities and to guaranteeing full transparency thereon. In this connection, any suspicion about the recently discovered large underground facilities under construction near Yongbyon should be cleared up fully and expeditiously.

The proliferation and use of chemical weapons are other sources of grave and urgent concern. My delegation commends the steady progress achieved by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) towards the implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction during its first year. However, the Convention and the OPCW being at an initial stage, the full compliance of all States parties with the Convention is indispensable for attaining the goal of the Convention. At the domestic level, each State party is obliged to enact implementing legislation and to enforce it strictly. As one of the original parties to the Convention,

the Republic of Korea is committed to its full implementation.

Equally important is the urgent need for universal adherence to the Convention. Major possessors of chemical weapons that have not yet acceded to the Convention are called upon to do so without further delay. In particular, we urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to join the Convention promptly in order to make the Korean peninsula free from these horrendous weapons of mass destruction.

The proliferation of biological weapons is another source of grave concern, due to their terrible destructiveness and easy accessibility. My Government has been a staunch supporter of the efforts of the international community to prepare a protocol to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, designed to remove its weaknesses related to a verification regime. The Republic of Korea was one of 57 sponsors of the Declaration adopted at the informal ministerial meeting last month here in New York. Moreover, my Government has actively participated in the negotiations on the protocol in the Ad Hoc Group and looks forward to its early conclusion.

Missiles as a means of delivering weapons of mass destruction pose as serious a threat to peace and security as do those weapons of mass destruction themselves. In our view, the time has come for the international community to embark on exploring the ways and means to curb missile proliferation. This will require the collective political will of the international community. However, the experience acquired and accumulated through negotiations and the operation of legal instruments relating to weapons of mass destruction can also be instrumental in working out a legal instrument designed to curb the proliferation of the delivery means of such weapons.

North Korea's launching of a multiple-stage rocket last August has aroused international concern anew over the dangers of missile proliferation in North-East Asia. North Korea's test-launching has a serious security implication for the strategic environment in the region and beyond. The Security Council promptly expressed its deep concern over the matter. My Government calls upon the international community to take concerted action to stop the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from developing, testing, deploying and exporting missiles.

Upholding the basic principles of international humanitarian law, the Republic of Korea fully shares the international community's concern over the sufferings caused and costs incurred by the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. In this spirit, my Government declared last year and has implemented faithfully an indefinite extension of its moratorium on the export of anti-personnel landmines. My Government has also made financial contributions to the United Nations mine-action programme. We will continue to do so.

The paramount security needs on the Korean peninsula do not, unfortunately, allow us to forgo immediately the use of anti-personnel landmines as a major defensive weapon in the specifically limited area of the demilitarized zone. My Government is of the view that the Conference on Disarmament should work out a legally binding and universally applicable instrument banning the transfer of all kinds of anti-personnel landmines.

With the sporadic outbreak of local conflicts, the excessive accumulations of small arms and light weapons have not only had direct human costs, but also brought immeasurable social and economic dislocation. What concerns us most is that the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons is seriously hampering the efforts towards peace building after conflicts cease. Given the real and tremendous damage to lives and properties, the international community should address this matter with the utmost care and urgency.

The guidelines for international arms transfers, concluded at the United Nations Disarmament Commission in 1996, can serve as a code of conduct for all States in arms transfers. We believe that this guidance will enhance transparency in international arms transfers, conducive to the eradication of illicit arms trade. It is also encouraging to see recent regional efforts to adopt binding legal instruments to that effect. We commend the adoption by the Organization of American States in November 1997 of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Production of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives, and Other Related Materials. We look forward to a global convention of a similar nature in the foreseeable future.

With regard to the future course of action on the issue of small arms and light weapons, my Government endorses the Oslo platform adopted last July. Given the complexity of the matter, short-term efforts must be focused on a comprehensive solution specific to each situation, while it is desirable to devise a global framework in a longer perspective. My Government also supports the

recommendation by the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms on the convening of an international conference on the illicit arms trade, as referred to in the General Assembly resolution 52/38 J.

Empirical lessons have taught us that the creation of a stable strategic environment should precede the achievement of any tangible disarmament measures. Despite the end of the cold war, however, uncertainty is still looming large in Asia. Together with many competing territorial claims, there remain potentially dangerous flashpoints. Further, the recent economic malaise is another source of concern, casting a shadow over the overall peace and security of Asia.

This uncertain security landscape makes it more important and necessary than ever to initiate a habit of dialogue on security matters and to institutionalize as necessary the web of security dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region. It is with this belief that my Government has been committed to the process of the Association of South-East Asian Nations Regional Forum (ARF), currently the only region-wide Government-level security dialogue arrangement. Over the last four years, the ARF has made significant strides in developing and implementing various confidence-building measures in the Asia-Pacific region. The ARF is now poised to explore the possibility of employing preventive diplomacy measures and to move to a higher level of security dialogue in the region. Likewise, the establishment of a multilateral security dialogue in North-East Asia will serve to improve the security environment in the region, making it conducive to more transparency, more predictability and, finally, to enacting more tangible disarmament measures. My Government hopes that such a dialogue will soon materialize with the participation of all States concerned in the region.

Next year marks the centennial of the first peace conference at The Hague. Nevertheless, an ever-growing arms race and ceaseless conflicts still haunt mankind. Nuclear horror lingers on. Many daunting challenges to peace and security will persist, requiring our energies and wisdom for many years to come. Peace dividends do not come free of charge. They can only be earned by our collective hard work. The old truism remains as valid as ever: War begins in the minds of men and it is in the minds of men that peace must be constructed. My delegation earnestly hopes that this year's deliberations of the First Committee will make an important and positive step forward in our long endeavour to create a more peaceful and secure world.

The Chairman (*interpretation from French*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second.

Mr. Kim Sam Jong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I would like to speak in exercise of the right of reply with regard to the allegations made by the representatives of Japan, South Korea and some other countries, who referred yesterday and today to the Korean situation and the nuclear risk on the Korean peninsula. Some representatives urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to come into full compliance with safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) immediately, while saying that they supported the Agreed Framework between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States. This is a clear contradiction. According to the Agreed Framework, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is supposed to come into full compliance with its safeguards agreements with the IAEA when a significant portion of the light-water reactor project is completed. Even construction of the basement of the light-water reactor project by the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), led by the United States, has not yet begun, although four years have passed since the conclusion of the Agreement, and it is expected to take at least several years for the completion of a significant portion of the project. This is the reality in terms of the implementation of the Agreed Framework.

Considering all these facts, we must question why there is the insistence that we come into full compliance right now, in contradiction of the Agreed Framework. Are those concerned really ignorant of the substance of the Agreed Framework; do they want to see the Agreed Framework collapse; or do they prefer to join in mere slander and pressure against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea without a proper reason? I would like to urge them to act with discretion and impartiality.

As for the issue of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, it can never be realized as long as there are nuclear threats against the North and a nuclear umbrella for the South. The South Korean authorities should stop begging for nuclear protection, and the United States should refrain from providing a nuclear umbrella to South Korea and give legally binding assurances not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the Democratic People's

Republic of Korea, if they really want to see a denuclearized Korean peninsula.

Our position on the satellite launch is clear. The satellite launch is a matter of the sovereignty of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. No country can interfere with it. Who can dare say we have no right to launch satellites? Since Japan, which has launched satellites many times, has never notified our country in advance, we are not obliged to do so. I would like to underline the reason why Japan is crying so loudly about our satellite launch being a threat to its security, while not saying even a word about satellite launches by other big countries near Japan. The answer is simple. The Japanese allegations prove that Japan has not discarded the ambition of invading Korea. If it had already discarded such an ambition, it would not have regarded our satellite launching capacity as a threat, because it is inconceivable that Korea would initiate a forceful attack against Japan.

History shows that Japan has invaded Korea many times, but Korea has never invaded Japan. Unless Japan attacks other countries, it will not be attacked. The fact that Japan does not cry about satellite launches by other countries seems to indicate that Japan cannot even think of invading them, but the case of Korea is different. What the Japanese are afraid of is that if they invade Korea their territory might be counter-attacked. The Japanese should know that the louder they cry about our satellite launch, the more they reveal their true intention of invading Korea. Other countries should distinguish the real intention of the Japanese, who have invaded Korea and other countries so many times in the past. If some developed countries continue to blame the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for its satellite launch, taking the side of Japan, it will be interpreted that they treat security matters partially and want the small developing countries not to possess high technology and to remain backward for ever.

As for the disarmament and security issues regarding the Korean peninsula, political and military threats against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea should be removed first. At the international level the cold war came to an end, but on the Korean peninsula cold-war structures still exist. Politically, competition and confrontation between the North and the South are still instigated by the attempts to reunify the divided peninsula on the basis of one system by those forces backed by certain countries. The military situation reflects the political confrontation. The United States and Japan are backing the South Koreans to pursue their ambition of reunifying the peninsula based on their own system by devising the United States-Japan defense cooperation guidelines and the United States-South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty, and by forming a three-way military alliance against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. To cope with this military build-up against us we cannot but intensify our defence capacity for deterrence. This tense situation of cold-war confrontation, in which the North is confronted with a huge military build-up prevents the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from participating more actively in debates on various disarmament and international security matters at the United Nations.

Therefore, priority should be given to the dismantling of cold-war structures on the Korean peninsula, which should be done on the part of the United States, Japan and South Korea if those disarmament and security matters relating to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are to be resolved smoothly. Ignoring this reality and pressing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea unilaterally with regard to disarmament and security matters is nothing less than hypocrisy. The international community should not deny the fact that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is threatened by the military build-up of hostile forces and should demand that those countries concerned discontinue their political and military threat against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and demand the withdrawal of United States troops from South Korea.

Mr. Hayashi (Japan): I said in my statement a moment ago only that the recent missile launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had caused serious concern for the security of North-East Asia and Japan. In that connection, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea fired a powerful rocket without giving prior notification through one of the most densely travelled airspaces used for civil air navigation between North America and the Far East, and that it fell in waters heavily used for maritime traffic and fishing activities.

I would also like to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that when we launched a satellite in the past we notified, in accordance with the procedures stipulated by International Civil Aviation Organization and International Maritime Organization Conventions, those aircraft and ships travelling in the area which might be harmed due to a launching failure.

So we could not accept the criticism by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that we have not given any notice in the case of our satellite launchings in the past.

Mr. Kim Sam Jong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): I would like to repeat that although Japan has launched satellites many times, it has never notified us in advance. In this connection, we have no obligation to inform the Japanese in advance.

Statement by the Chairman

The Chairman: I would like to recall that the Committee has not elected its Rapporteur, and I urge the Group of African States to expedite the process of nominating a candidate so that the Committee may do so.

We are grateful for the presence today of Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, particularly after his important mission for the cause of disarmament. On behalf of the Committee, I thank him for his presence today and for following the work of the Committee.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.